BBC

10 TREASON TRIALS THAT SHOOK BRITAIN

HiSTORY MAGAZINE

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January 2022 / **www.historyextra.com**

Queen of spies

How Victoria deployed espionage to defy her enemies

Medieval saint or monster?
The beauty and bigotry of King Louis IX

Chairman Mao's British captive
A schoolboy prisoner in Communist China

Did Britain really roar in the 1920s?

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WELCOME

JANUARY 2022

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

Welcome to our first edition of 2022. Each new year brings with it a whole array of anniversaries to commemorate, many of which we'll be exploring over the coming months. One that would be remiss of us to overlook is the **centenary of the BBC** itself, which first took to the airwaves in November 1922. Over the course of this year, we're going to be examining the corporation's history through a regular feature by media historian David Hendy, in which he'll highlight key themes from the past hundred years. We begin this month with the BBC's first forays on to the airwaves, in dusty, airless rooms and with intimidating microphones. You'll find his piece on page 46.

What kind of nation was the BBC broadcasting to in 1922? Was this **the age of the roaring twenties**, or did the First World War still cast a pall over Britain? In her feature on page 38, Sarah Hellawell takes a look at the country in the early 1920s to reveal a society trying to escape its past, while driving towards an exciting but uncertain future.

Finally, if I asked you to name a master of espionage, dressed in black, with expensive tastes, I don't expect you'd go for **Queen Victoria**. But if you had done you wouldn't be mistaken, because Britain's second-longest reigning monarch turns out to have been the head of an unlikely spying network. In our eye-opening cover feature this month, Rory Cormac and Richard J Aldrich explain why Victoria was the real queen of spies. That's on page 22.

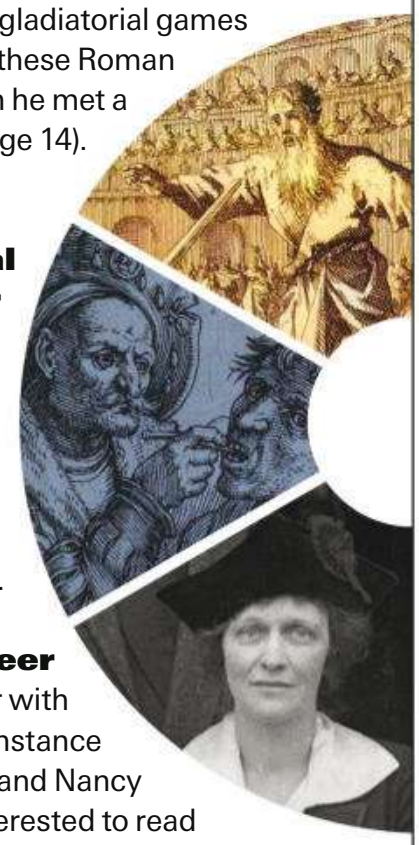
I hope you enjoy the issue.

Rob Attar
Editor

THREE THINGS I'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. A monk stopped the show
I was fascinated to learn that a monk's brave attempt to interrupt a gladiatorial games led to the banning of these Roman blood sports – although he met a grisly end (page 14).

2. Dentistry's royal practitioner
I'd happily pay never to go to the dentist again, but the Scottish king James IV was apparently so fascinated by dentistry that he paid his subjects to be allowed to remove their teeth (p37).



3. Political pioneer
Though I was familiar with the names of Constance Markievicz and Nancy Astor, I was interested to read about Margaret Wintringham, who became, in 1921, the first British-born female MP to sit in the House of Commons (p43).

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

David Hendy
"2022 marks the BBC's centenary – and throughout the year, I will be highlighting key episodes in the corporation's history to show its profound impact on our lives."
David reveals the roots of the BBC in the first instalment of his new series on page 46

Monica Whitlock
"If you're a teenager stuck at home through the Covid-19 pandemic, spare a thought for Kim Gordon, the schoolboy who spent two years imprisoned in a Chinese hotel room, an inside witness to the drama of the Cultural Revolution."
Monica views the chaos of the Cultural Revolution through the eyes of one schoolboy on page 62

Thomas Harding
"I'm embarrassed to say I knew almost nothing about Britain's role in the slave plantations of the Caribbean – and the horrific conditions endured by enslaved people all the way into the 1830s – until I started this research."
Thomas remembers the Demerara uprising and its influence on abolitionists on page 74

Matthew Gabriele
"King Louis IX of France built soaring chapels and burnt books, was renowned for his charity and persecuted minority communities. That very human complexity animates our new book, *The Bright Ages*."
Matthew considers the complicated legacy of the medieval monarch on page 30

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Subscriptions & back issues *BBC History Magazine*, PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF. Basic annual subscription rates: UK: £48, Eire/Europe: £67, ROW: £69

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ON THE COVER: QUEEN VICTORIA C1890: ALAMY. STEAMPUNK COLLAGE BACKGROUND: DREAMSTIME. CHARLES I BY ANTHONY VAN DYCK (1599-1641): ALAMY. WILLIAM JOYCE, AKA LORD HAW-HAW: SHUTTERSTOCK. ALICE, LADY LISLE: ALAMY. 1920S SAXOPHONIST, SOHO, LONDON: GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: TIME STUBBINGS/ CHRISTIAN JUNGEBLODT/STEVE SAYERS/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/ JOHNNY HALL

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BBC/MARY EVANS/ALAMY/ERIC GORDON/BRIDGEMAN

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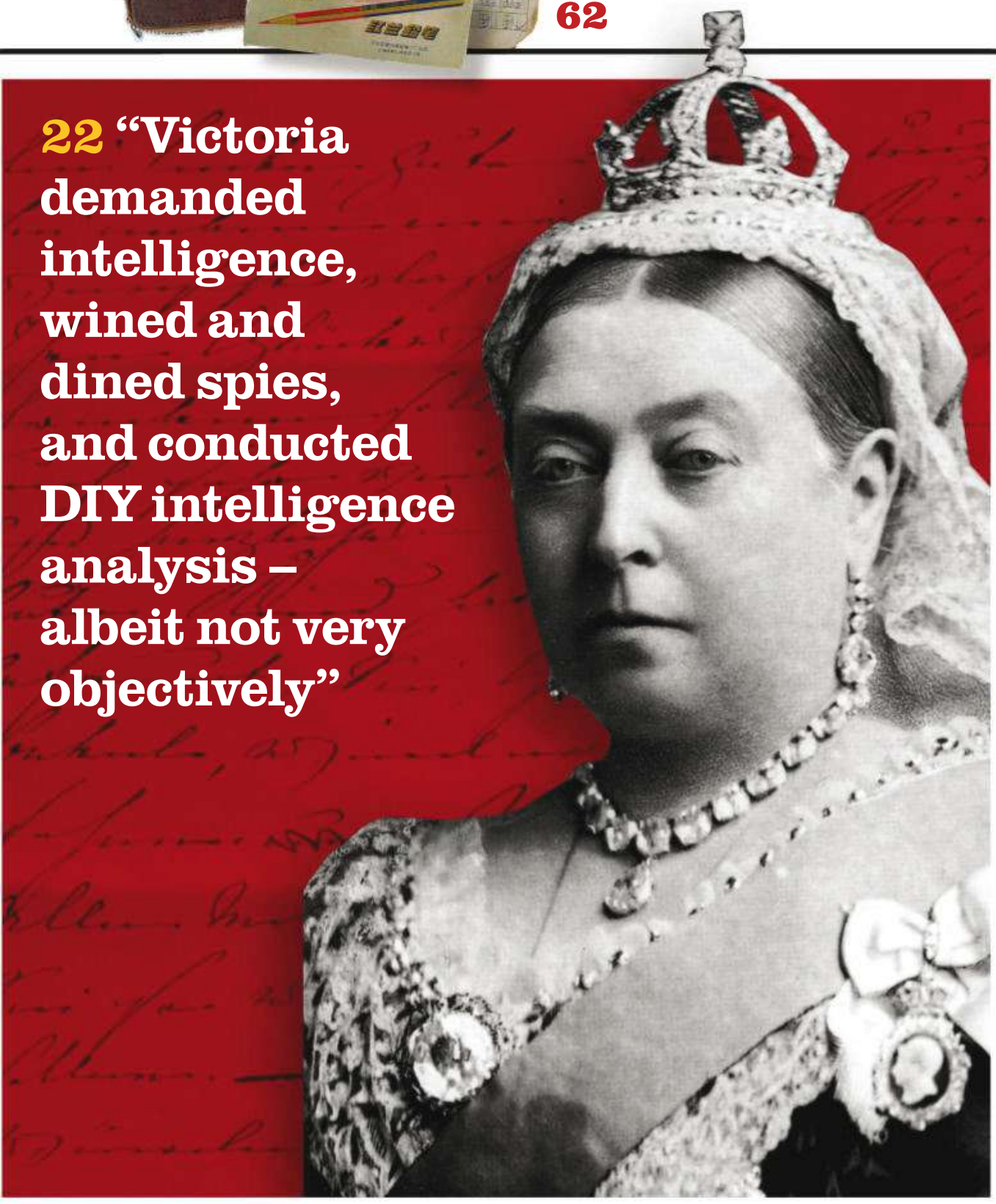

22 “Victoria demanded intelligence, wined and dined spies, and conducted DIY intelligence analysis – albeit not very objectively”

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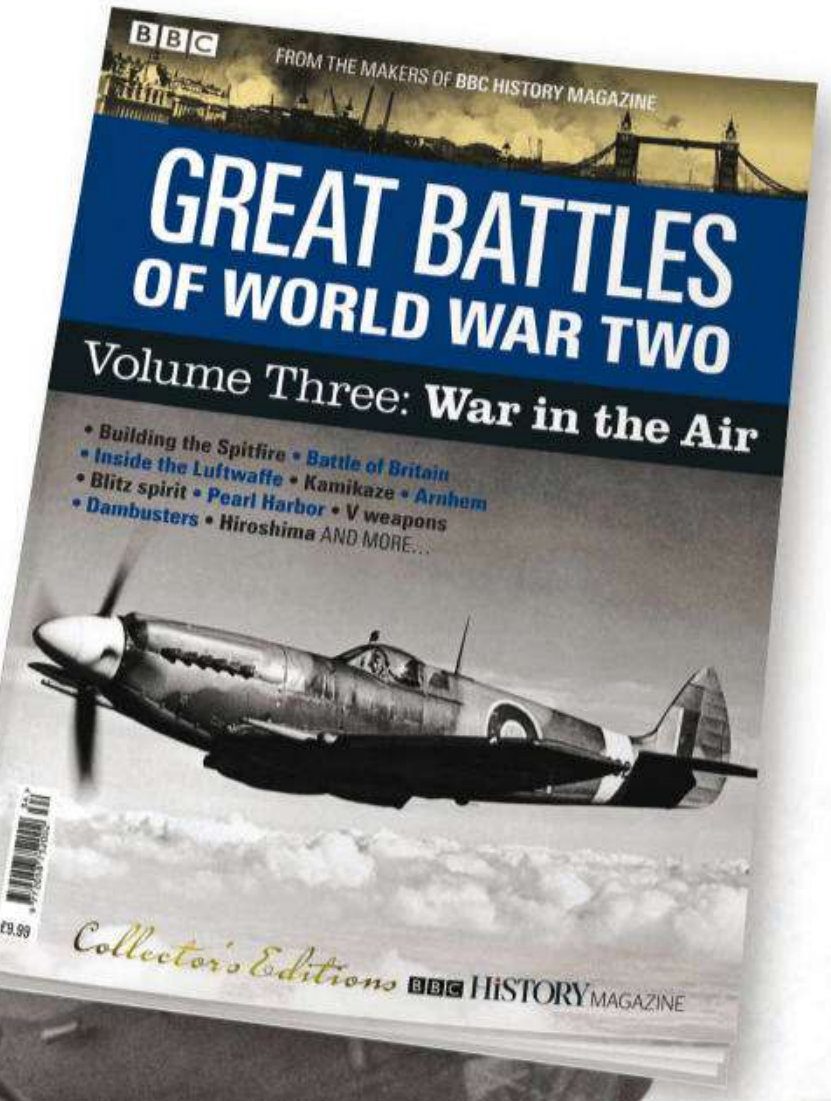
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GETTY IMAGES

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

EYE-OPENER

Treasure trove

This remarkable collection of coins and golden artefacts, found in an unremarkable field in west Norfolk, has been declared the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold coins unearthed in England to date.

The hoard comprises 131 coins, a gold bar and pendant, and two other artefacts thought to be fragments of jewellery. All date from between approximately AD 580 and 630, and were discovered in the field over a period of almost 30 years between 1991 and 2020. An inquest at Norfolk Coroner's Court in November declared all of the items to be part of the same hoard, and that the collection is treasure – meaning that it will now become property of the crown.

Gareth Williams, curator of early medieval coins at the British Museum, hailed the discovery as "a hugely important find". "It is close in date to the famous ship burial from Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, and although it doesn't contain as much gold as the whole of the Sutton Hoo burial, it contains many more coins," he said. "In fact, it is the largest coin hoard of the period known to date... and will help to transform our understanding of the economy of early Anglo-Saxon England."

Have a story? Please email Matt Elton at matt.elton@immediate.co.uk

TALKING POINTS

Attention to detail

A new Beatles documentary prompted Twitter users to ask whether other histories could benefit from adopting its focus on small human details. **ANNA WHITELOCK** followed the debate

Recent documentary series *The Beatles: Get Back* prompted **Greg Jenner** (@greg_jenner) to consider how well he and his fellow historians capture the three-dimensional human nature of the eras they study – and if it's even possible. "Watching *Get Back*, and having read many books about the Beatles, is a salutary reminder that historians and memoirists can easily fail to capture the essence of the banal and joyous humanity on display when they tell true stories," he tweeted. "Historians try to paint a portrait without the subject being in the room; all we get are scraps of evidence… I'm not a fully paid-up postmodernist who thinks the past is utterly unknowable, but it really does bring it home that – when we write about Shakespeare or Austen or Jefferson or Aristotle – are we missing the most important stuff of all – them [hanging out] with their friends?"

Jenner's query sparked discussion about whether we can ever really be certain of historical truth. **Paul Hudson** (@paulhudson26), for instance, asked: "How do we know all this stuff from a thousand years ago? It's rarely first-hand discoveries… How much do those recounts or interpretations morph without observer testimony?" **Elis James** (@elisjames) picked up on Jenner's mention of postmodernism: "I studied the postmodernists at uni… I just couldn't understand it, especially the 'all histories are fictions, and all as valid as each other' argument." Jenner responded that "It's a good intellectual exercise, and it's not unfounded to say all knowledge systems are cultural artefacts, but I think we can know some things while also knowing [that] we can't know all things."

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

Others focused on the idea of the intimate human details that might fall between gaps in the historical record. **Ruth Mather** (@ruth_mather) tweeted: "I went to a conference about protest history many moons ago, during which [UWE history professor] Steve Poole asked what protesters might have been up to when not protesting, and it's still something I come back to all the time. [There's] so much unrecorded, especially for those who we tend to encounter through state records."

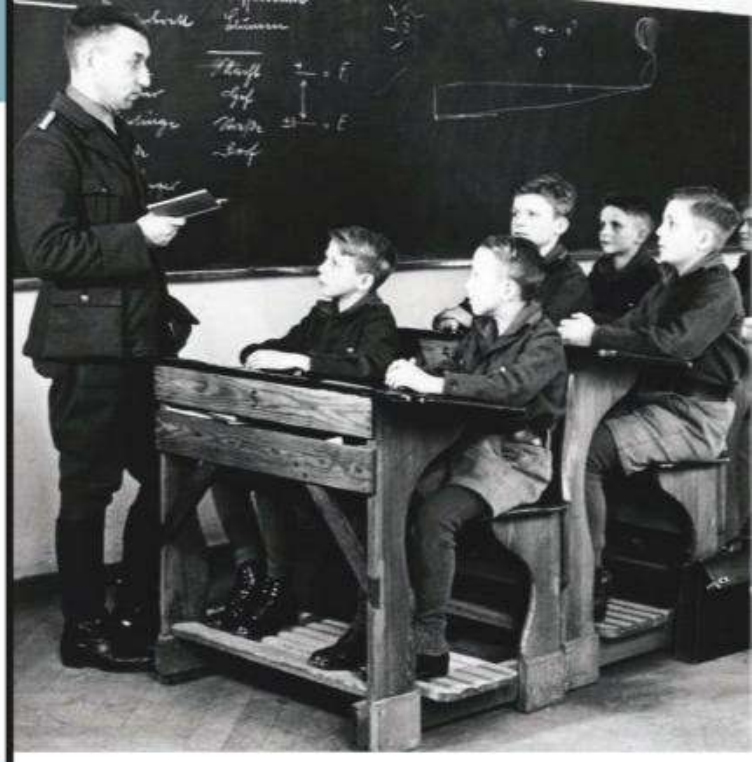
Matt Jollands (@JollandsMatthew), meanwhile, noted: "I really liked Francis Wheen's [1999] biography of Marx, because it did go large on the student japes and worrying about if a beard made him serious and all the stupid [nonsense] that otherwise gets lost in the big sweep of history." **Helen McCarthy** (@tweetheart4711) also mentioned the philosopher: "I would have loved to be a fly on the wall when Karl was at home with Mrs Marx and the kids. It would throw a whole new light on his philosophy. (And probably tell us why she never wrote hers.)"

Final word should go to **who, dr?** (@elegantfowl), who enthused: "I sense a school of history in the making. All hail the New Frivolists!" The name does have a certain ring to it… H

The Beatles, and band manager Brian Epstein (centre), in a hotel room in Paris, 1964

Anna Whitelock is professor of history at City, University of London

> "I'd have loved to be a fly on the wall when Karl was at home with Mrs Marx and the kids"



Pupils at a Nazi-run school in Germany, c1941. New research suggests that such institutions were partly modelled on elite schools in Britain

GETTY IMAGES

SECOND WORLD WAR

Nazis were "inspired by top British schools"

Commonly known as Napolas, the *Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten* (National Political Institutes of Education) were boarding schools set up in Nazi Germany to train future leaders. Now a new study shows that these institutions were explicitly influenced by British private schools.

The research, carried out by Durham University historian Helen Roche, draws on testimonies from more than 100 former students. It shows that an extensive series of exchange trips and sporting contests took place between German and British schools from 1934 to 1939. These were designed to present pupils and staff as "cultural ambassadors" for the Nazi regime, but also to glean insights into the way the British private school system worked. These findings were used to create an educational model that also drew on military corps and teaching in the ancient world.

Roche's work, published in her new book *The Third Reich's Elite Schools: A History of the Napolas* (Oxford University Press), highlights exchanges with British institutions including Bingley Grammar School in Yorkshire and tournaments involving Harrow and Eton. "British public schools might have educated the rulers of the centuries-old British empire, but it was ultimately envisaged that the Napolas should train the rulers of the 'Thousand Year Reich'," said Roche. "Understanding the Napolas gives us crucial new insights into... how the Third Reich moulded its very youngest citizens." H

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

This tiny golden artefact was found in farmland near property once owned by Richard III

▲ Metal detectorist uncovers miniature golden "bible"

Measuring 1.5 centimetres long, weighing just 5g and crafted from 22 or 24-carat gold, this tiny artefact in the shape of a bible is thought to date from the 15th century – and was found by chance by a metal detectorist near York.

Decorated with images of St Leonard and St Margaret, both of whom are patron saints of childbirth, the "bible" was discovered by NHS nurse Buffy Bailey on farmland near property that once belonged to Plantagenet king Richard III. It's therefore been suggested that the object may have been owned by the king's wife, Anne Neville, or one of his female relatives, and used as a form of divine protection during pregnancy. Comparisons have also been drawn to the Middleham Jewel, a gold pendant found in 1985 near Middleham Castle, where Richard III spent some of his childhood. Both objects were created in the same century and bear Christian iconography.

The value of the "bible" is being assessed by experts at the Yorkshire Museum – with any proceeds to be split between Bailey and the owner of the farmland.

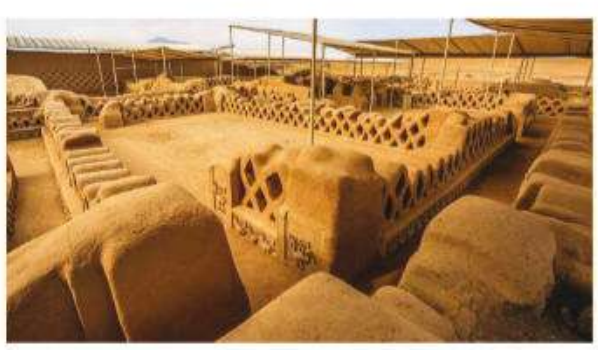
London Alfred statue "partly depicts Roman goddess" ▼

A statue of Alfred the Great in Southwark, often regarded as London's oldest outdoor statue, was constructed partly from an earlier effigy of the goddess Minerva, conservation work has revealed. The entire statue was believed to date from the medieval era, but new analysis shows that the top half is more recent – and that the lower half was crafted from a different material, possibly as early as the second century. Studies also suggest the Minerva statue's leg would have been three metres long, making it one of the most significant Roman-era statues yet found in Britain.

The statue of Alfred the Great in the London borough of Southwark has the legs of a goddess

▼ Archaeologists find mass grave in ancient Peruvian city

The remains of 25 people have been unearthed at the site of Chan Chan, which was the largest South American city of the pre-Columbian era. The skeletons were found in a grave measuring just 10 square metres, and all are of women aged under 30 when they died. Although the Chimú empire, of which Chan Chan was the capital, was known for making human sacrifices, experts say there is no evidence these people were ritually killed. Instead, it's thought that the mass grave may have been used for members of the social elite.



The remains of Chan Chan, the capital of the Chimú empire, which reached its peak in the 15th century

▲ Blake cottage among sites added to "at risk" register

A cottage in which poet William Blake wrote the lines later set to music as the hymn *Jerusalem* is at risk of being lost to ongoing decay, according to Historic England. The 17th-century house (pictured above), in the West Sussex village of Felpham, was placed into trust for the nation in 2015; an appeal is under way to raise funds to repair its thatch and masonry. Other locations added to the Heritage at Risk register include the wreck of the *Restoration*, a warship that sank off the Kent coast in 1703, and Bourn Mill, a 17th-century windmill in Cambridgeshire.

Slave rebellion history wins prestigious book prize ▼

An account of a little-known rebellion of enslaved people in 18th-century South America has been named the winner of the Cundill History Prize, one of the world's leading awards for history writing.

Blood on the River by Marjoleine Kars (pictured), published by the New Press, chronicles the 1763 Berbice slave uprising, a key moment in the history of what's now Guyana. Kars, professor of history at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, drew on hundreds of accounts of enslaved people and colonists to produce a day-by-day narrative of the revolt. Judges of the award, of which *HistoryExtra* is a media partner, praised Kars' book as "a model of historical scholarship".

TIM FORD–UMBC/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM/ BNPS/TRINITY HOUSE

MICHAEL WOOD ON...
THE FUTURE OF THE PARTHENON SCULPTURES

"The case is unique: the sculptures are bound up with Greek identity"

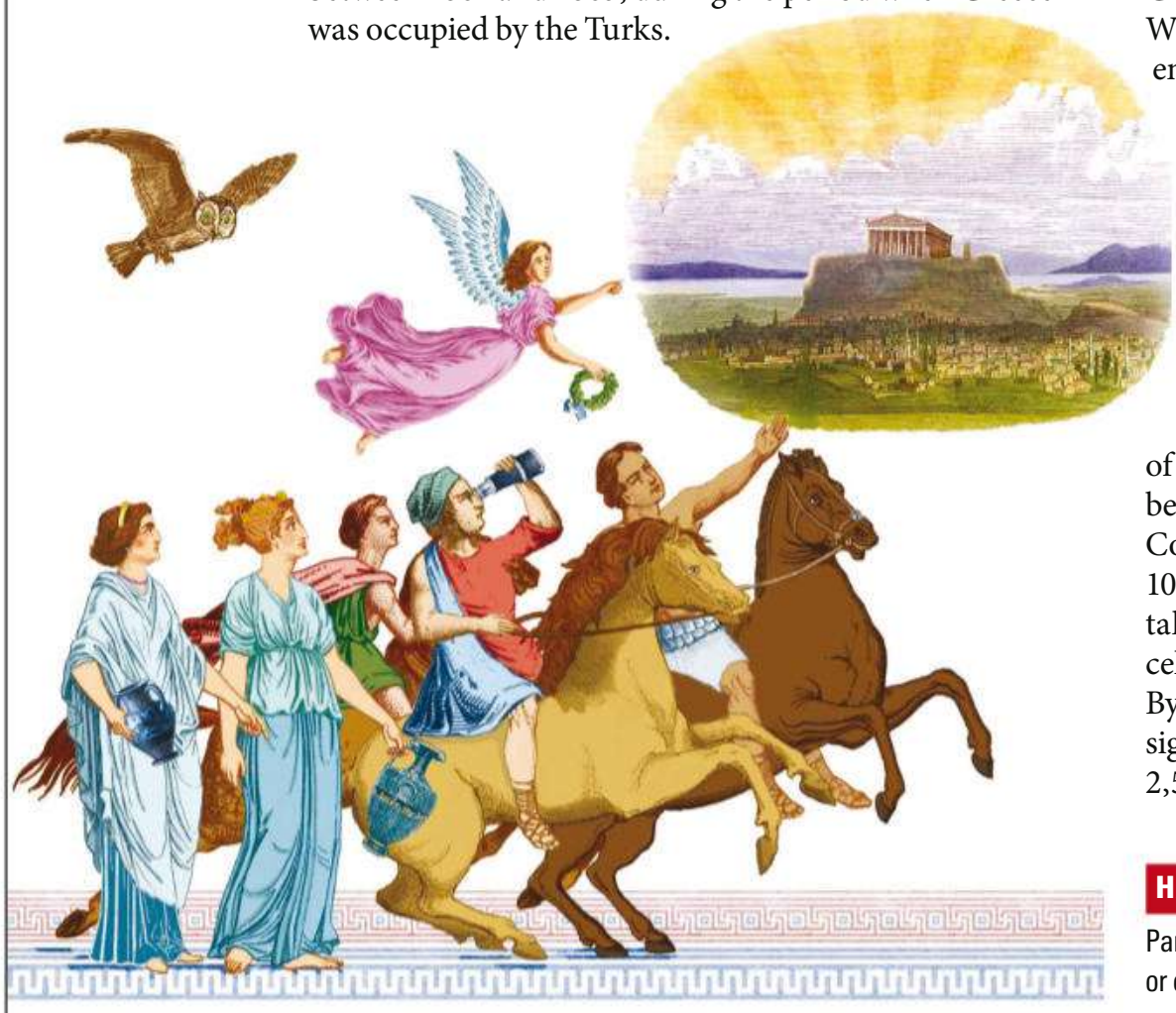
Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his latest book is *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2021). His Twitter handle is @mayavision

BBC

Just before the first lockdown, I went to see the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum with a Greek friend. Though I had never been happy about them being in London, it was a visceral shock to see them through Greek eyes. The Parthenon Sculptures (let's call them as they should be named) seemed diminished in the austere Duveen Gallery on a cold Bloomsbury afternoon, rather than in the light of Attica. The feeling was inescapable. They are in the wrong place.

Of course, the museums created in the colonial era are full of treasures from other countries looted by Europeans. Calls for the return of artefacts are growing everywhere as the world wakes up to what the European powers did during the age of imperialism. Indeed, some of the so-called Benin Bronzes seized during the punitive raid of 1897 have been handed back to Nigeria, with more to follow.

The case of the Parthenon Sculptures, though, is unique. They are bound up with Greek identity. As the Greek prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has said, they are the pre-eminent symbol of the link between the Greek people and their past. Built in the age of Pericles, the Parthenon was the city shrine of Athens – the greatest ancient centre of Greek culture. Later a church, then a mosque, it remained largely intact until it was blown up in a siege in 1687. The sculptures were removed by Lord Elgin between 1801 and 1805, during the period when Greece was occupied by the Turks.



Soon after, in 1821, the Greek War of Independence began – the first of the great modern liberation movements, fought with incredible courage and resolution on the part of the Greek people. The Parthenon symbolised what Greece meant not only to them but to the whole world. So for the small state that gained independence in 1832 – albeit without the north, without Crete and the Dodecanese, and without Constantinople, the "capital of memory", which never came back – one of the first acts was to restore the Acropolis and its shattered temple of Athena.

During the Second World War it was suggested that the sculptures should be returned; nothing came of that. My feeling now is that we should make it happen. Let's not see it as a concession made through gritted teeth, but as a magnanimous act by the British people that acknowledges our historic debt to Greece. It will make the UK feel good; it will make the world a better place. Dare I even suggest that the move could be a plus for the vaunted "Global Britain"?

Boris Johnson has previously stated his opposition to the sculptures' return. They belong to the world, he has argued, and London is as good a place as any for them to remain. By far the best place, though, is surely Athens, where all the sculptures could be united under one roof in the beautiful museum? The prime minister has also expressed concerns that moving the sculptures would enfeeble the British Museum's collection. But would it? Most people do not go to the British Museum to see the sculptures, whereas they are uniquely important to Greeks. Indeed, in my view, its status as "Museum of the World" would be enhanced by such a gesture: it would emphasise that the sculptures are the legacy of all humanity, and that giving them back is the right thing to do. Times and attitudes have changed.

So I propose two points to ponder. First, we should see this as an international effort. Though most of the sculptures are in London and Athens, there are pieces in the Vatican, the Louvre, Vienna, Würzburg and Copenhagen. Let's give them all back, so everyone contributes.

Second, consider the timescale. The 200th anniversary of the start of the Greek War of Independence has just been celebrated. The war ended in 1829, and the Treaty of Constantinople gave Greece her freedom in 1832. Now, 10 years may seem a long time to wait, but repatriation will take time. So let's start talking now and build up to a great celebration of the Greek spirit on the 2032 anniversary. By that time, the sculptures could have been installed in sight of the Acropolis where they were created almost 2,500 years ago – back in the divine light of Attica. H

HAVE YOUR SAY What do you think about the future of the Parthenon Sculptures? Share your views on our social media platforms or email us at: *letters@historyextra.com*

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ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in January in history

28 JANUARY 1813

Pride and Prejudice is published

Jane Austen's masterpiece finally reaches the booksellers' shelves

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." So begins Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. It's one of the best-loved novels in the English language – yet relatively few readers realise just how long it took her to complete and publish it.

Austen began composing *Pride and Prejudice* in the autumn of 1796. She was not yet 21, and had not yet published a word. When she read the first version (entitled *First Impressions*) to her family, they loved it. Her father, George, even wrote to a publisher in London, Thomas Cadell, to ask if he would be interested in printing it. Cadell simply sent back the letter, marking it "Declined by Return of Post".

For several years, *First Impressions* gathered dust in a drawer. Then, by around 1811, Austen took it out again. Though it's hard to be sure – the original manuscript is lost – she almost certainly made considerable alterations, dropping its epistolary format and changing the title to the now-familiar one. She soon found a publisher for this new version: Thomas Egerton, of the Military Library, who paid her £110.

On 28 January 1813, the novel made its first appearance in the bookshops, bound in three handsome volumes and priced at 18 shillings. Though it was hardly an instant bestseller, its reputation soon began to grow. "Buy it immediately," playwright Richard Sheridan told a friend, adding that it was "one of the cleverest things" he had ever read.

Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth in the 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane Austen took more than 15 years to complete and publish her best-known novel

MARY EVANS/ALAMY

Edward Balliol, claimant to the Scottish throne, depicted in an engraving

20 JANUARY 1356

After a struggle for the Scottish throne lasting almost a quarter of a century, **Edward Balliol renounces his claim** in return for an English pension of £2,000 a year. He retires to Yorkshire, and never returns to his native Scotland.

1 JANUARY 1540

Henry VIII meets his bride-to-be, Anne of Cleves

The rambunctious king discovers a fatal incompatibility

As the winter sun dipped towards the horizon on New Year's Day 1540, Anne of Cleves stood at the window of the Bishop's Palace in Rochester. She had been on the road for weeks, having pledged to become the fourth wife of King Henry VIII.

Suddenly, footsteps sounded on the stairs and a man appeared in the doorway: Sir Anthony Browne, master of the king's horse, who had left Greenwich earlier that day.

Bored of waiting for his bride, Henry had decided to welcome her with what he considered a hilarious prank. He and a group of friends rode to Rochester in matching hoods and capes, like Robin Hood and his Merry Men. Out of politeness, though, he sent Browne ahead to warn her.

As Anne stared at Browne in bewilderment, he knew she was wrong for Henry. He had, he later recalled, never been "more dismayed in all his life".

Then the door burst open and men in multicoloured hoods leapt into the room, roaring with laughter. Anne said nothing, but gave a nervous half-smile. The largest newcomer bowed low and held out a gift – from the king himself, he said grandly. Baffled, Anne took it. Then she turned away.

There was a dreadful silence. The large man stood there, flummoxed, then strode out of the room. A few moments later he returned without his hood. Only then did Anne realise he was her future husband.

She tried to smile, but it was too late. On the barge back to Greenwich, Henry sulked in silence before calling for Browne. "I see nothing in this woman as men report of her," he said bitterly. "And I marvel that wise men would make such report as they have done."

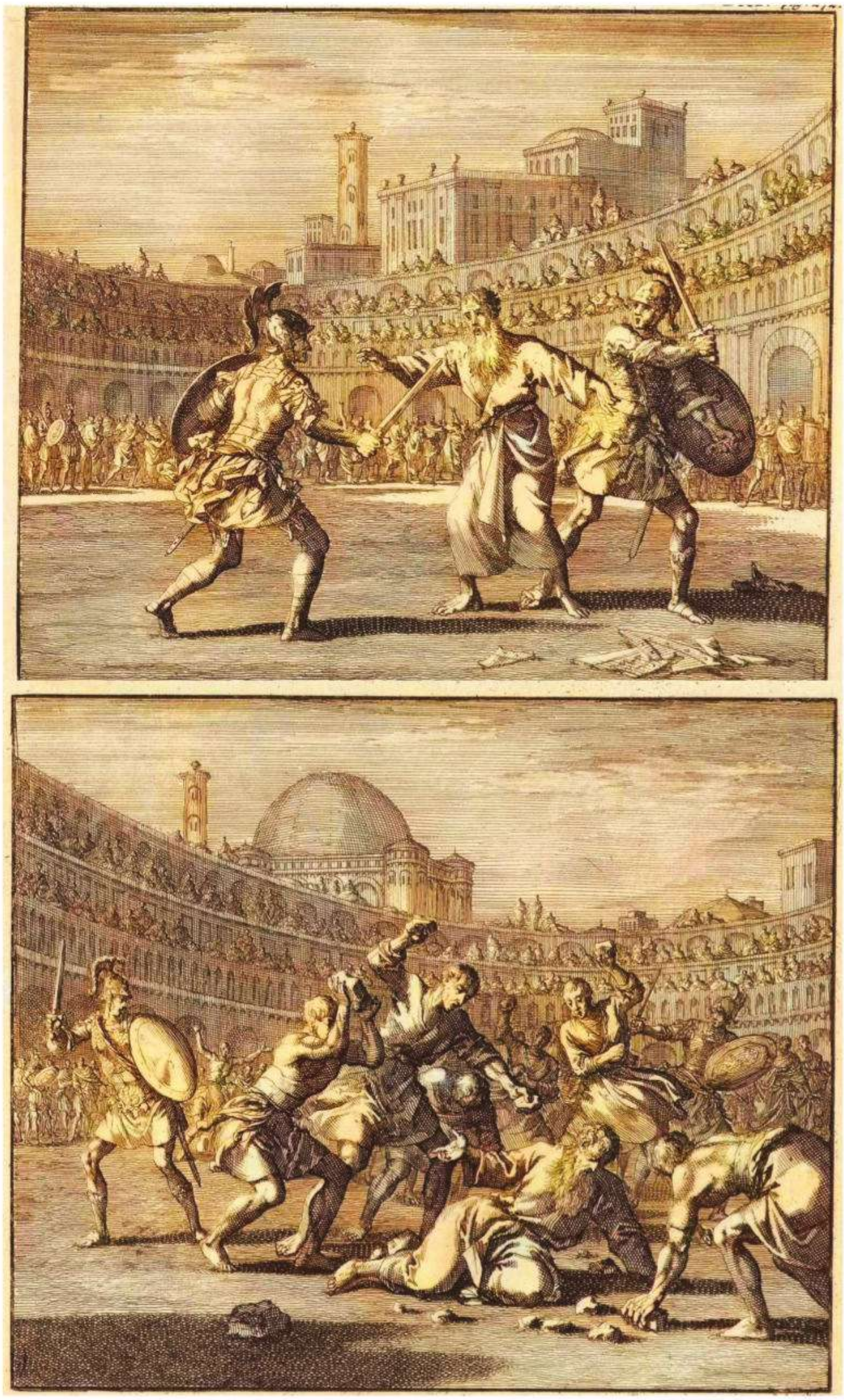
Browne said nothing. He knew the marriage was doomed.

ILLUSTRATION BY **IAN MORRIS**

The coat of arms of Simon de Lalaing, a knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which was founded in January 1430

10 JANUARY 1430

To celebrate his wedding to Isabella of Portugal, the Burgundian ruler **Philip the Good founds the Order of the Golden Fleece**. Later adopted by his Habsburg successors, it becomes the pre-eminent Catholic order of chivalry, considered the most prestigious in the world.



Telemachus tries to stop a gladiatorial bout – then suffers the consequences, as depicted in 18th-century illustrations. Though his act resulted in death for the Christian monk, it did prompt the Roman emperor to ban the games

1 JANUARY 404

A monk tackles the gladiators

Telemachus intervenes in an attempt to halt Rome's bloody public games

By the beginning of the fifth century AD, the gladiatorial games that had once so entranced the Roman crowds were in steep decline. To the disappointment of the connoisseurs, brutal slaughter had gone out of fashion. Under the new state religion, Christianity, the games were seen as a reactionary relic. Attendances were dwindling, the arenas were crumbling and the standard of the fighters was not what it had been.

Then, for the fans, came the worst blow of all. On the first day of AD 404 (though in truth it's hard to be sure of the exact date), a crowd gathered at one of Rome's arenas, perhaps the Colosseum, for some good unclean fun. Just as things were getting interesting, a scruffy figure leapt into the arena, rushed to the gladiators and tried to drag them apart. "In the name of Christ, forbear!" he shouted – or so some later accounts claimed.

The protester, it transpired, was an ascetic monk named Telemachus from the eastern part of the empire, who was visiting Rome for some purpose of his own. Appalled by the "abominable spectacle", he was determined to stop it. The fans, though, were not happy. According to the church historian Theodoret of Cyrrhus, writing just a little after these events, the crowds reacted violently to Telemachus's intervention, stoning him to death. And that seemed to be the end of that.

But it wasn't. When the young (and extremely God-fearing) emperor Honorius heard about the monk's fate, he decided that enough was enough. By his edict, gladiatorial games were banned. So were trousers, interestingly – but that's another story.

AKG-IMAGES/ALAMY

Adolfo Hohenstein's poster for the original production of *Tosca*. Puccini's great work opened more than a decade after he first bid for the opera rights

14 JANUARY 1900

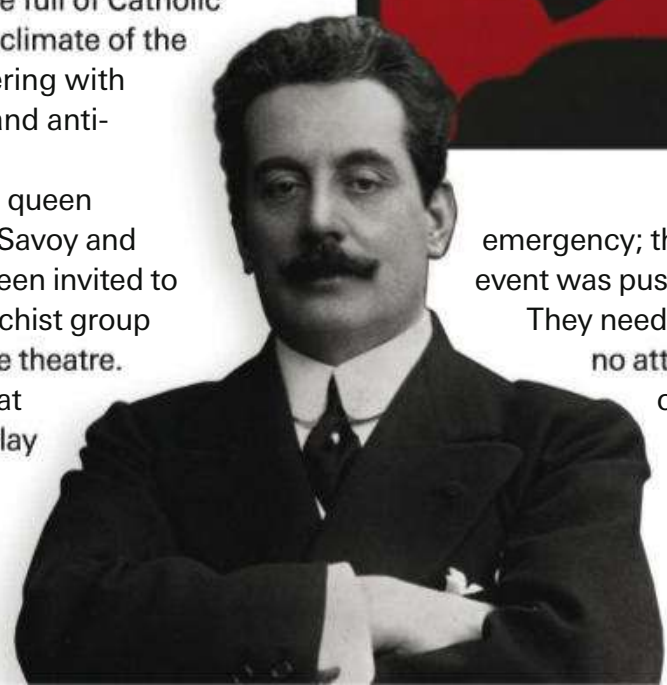
Tosca premieres in Rome

Puccini's dramatic opera wows the audience – despite threats from anarchists

The genesis of *Tosca*, often seen as Giacomo Puccini's masterpiece, was a saga in itself. His opera was based on the 1887 theatrical work *La Tosca* by the French playwright Victorien Sardou, who specialised in historical melodramas. Set in June 1800 in Rome, when that city was trapped between the armies of Napoleon and the kingdom of Naples, the original play was awash with murder, torture and surging passion. And since it starred Sarah Bernhardt, the most glamorous stage star of her day, it was a colossal international hit.

In May 1889, less than two years after the play's original production, Puccini (pictured below, inset) made his first bid for the operatic rights. He had already seen the play at least twice, and was convinced he could make it work. However, he did not obtain the rights, and Sardou instead struck a deal with a rival composer, Alberto Franchetti. Puccini never gave up, though, and in 1895 he convinced Franchetti to transfer the rights to him. By some accounts, he achieved this by persuading Franchetti that the story was too violent for an opera audience – and then proved that it certainly wasn't.

With glorious timing, *Tosca*'s première at Teatro Costanzi (now the Rome Opera House) was scheduled for 13 January 1900 – at the peak of the Holy Year celebrations, when the city would be full of Catholic pilgrims. In the febrile climate of the day, Rome was simmering with rumours of anarchist and anti-clerical terrorist plots.



BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Learning that Italy's queen consort Margherita of Savoy and other dignitaries had been invited to the première, one anarchist group threatened to bomb the theatre. The police arranged that the conductor would play the Royal March as a signal if there was an emergency; then, as a further precaution, the event was pushed back a day, to 14 January.

They need not have worried. There was no attack and, though some critics complained about its brutality, the audience loved *Tosca* – and it has remained at the heart of the opera canon ever since. H

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian, author and broadcaster. His new series of history books for children, *Adventures in Time* (Particular Books), is available now

WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER... BLOODY SUNDAY

Protesters face British Army soldiers in Derry/Londonderry on 30 January 1972, dubbed "Bloody Sunday". On this day 13 protesters were killed outright and at least 13 more were injured

MARY EVANS

"Bloody Sunday was a defining moment in the Troubles. As well as generating huge emotion, it also screamed a political challenge"

As we approach the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, **DIARMAID FERRITER** speaks to Rhiannon Davies about the destructive legacy of the events of 30 January 1972

What was the mood in Northern Ireland before the events of Bloody Sunday?
It was very fraught. The Troubles [conflict between mostly Protestant unionists (loyalists), pushing for Northern Ireland to remain within the UK, and largely Catholic nationalists hoping for the region to become part of the Republic of Ireland] had begun in earnest in 1969. Nobody knew how long they would last or what their extent would be, but by the early seventies it was clear that things were very, very difficult.

Bloody Sunday happened at the very beginning of 1972, which proved to be horrendous – the worst year of the Troubles, with almost 500 people killed. It had huge implications, not just for people in Northern Ireland but also for Anglo-Irish affairs, which were reaching one of the most difficult points.

What happened that day?
The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association had organised a march in Derry/Londonderry on 30 January 1972 to protest against the deeply unpopular policy of internment [imprisonment without trial] introduced in Northern Ireland in August 1971.

The original plan was for the protesters to leave the Creggan area and march towards the city centre. But they were diverted away from the centre and ended up moving towards Free Derry Corner, as it was known. At this juncture you get very contested narratives of what precisely occurred. It's been subjected to endless scrutiny and a number of inquiries over the decades.

The organisers were determined to try to keep the protest peaceful, but there were some who objected to attempts to prevent them from going where they wanted to go. Of course, the presence of British Army troops was seen as particularly provocative. It was in reaction to those who were challenging the British Army – whether that was with missiles or taunts – that the Parachute Regiment was mobilised and it was they who began to shoot at the unarmed protesters.

How many people were killed?

These events happened very, very quickly. Within a few seconds, soldiers had fatally shot in the back both 22-year-old Jim Wray and 27-year-old William McKinney. This was another very difficult aspect of Bloody Sunday – the shooting of civilians in the back.

In total, 13 people were killed outright on Bloody Sunday, and a fourteenth victim died later as a result of his injuries. In addition, at least 13 people were injured, and countless others were traumatised by the events.

What was the immediate aftermath of Bloody Sunday?

It did enormous damage to Anglo-Irish relations. If you read the transcript of a telephone call between the British prime minister Ted Heath and the Irish taoiseach (prime minister) Jack Lynch, made on the night of Bloody Sunday, you can feel the anguish on the part of Lynch and the defensiveness on the part of Heath, who really blamed the IRA for – as he put it – trying to take over the country.

There was also a huge reaction in the Republic of Ireland, which I think represents a highpoint of cross-border emotion about the Troubles. People walked off their jobs on the Monday after Bloody Sunday. There were all sorts of impromptu protests – the British embassy in Dublin was set ablaze.

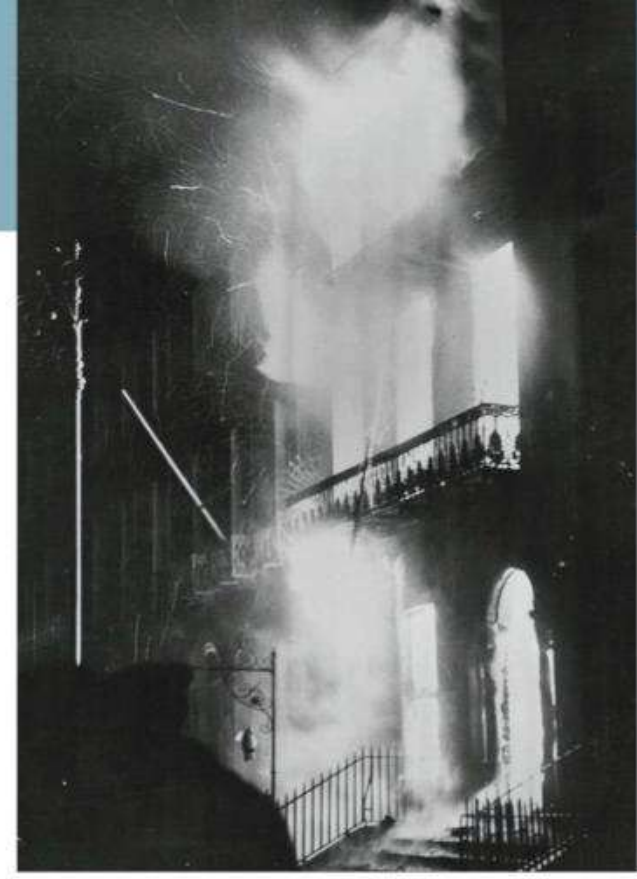
Did the episode lead to increased support for the IRA?

Most certainly. The IRA enjoyed an upsurge in enthusiasm for its project and its methods. There were many who were drawn into its ranks because of the scale of the anger at Bloody Sunday; people were queueing up to join the IRA in Derry/Londonderry after the shootings.

What other impacts did the events that day have on the Troubles?

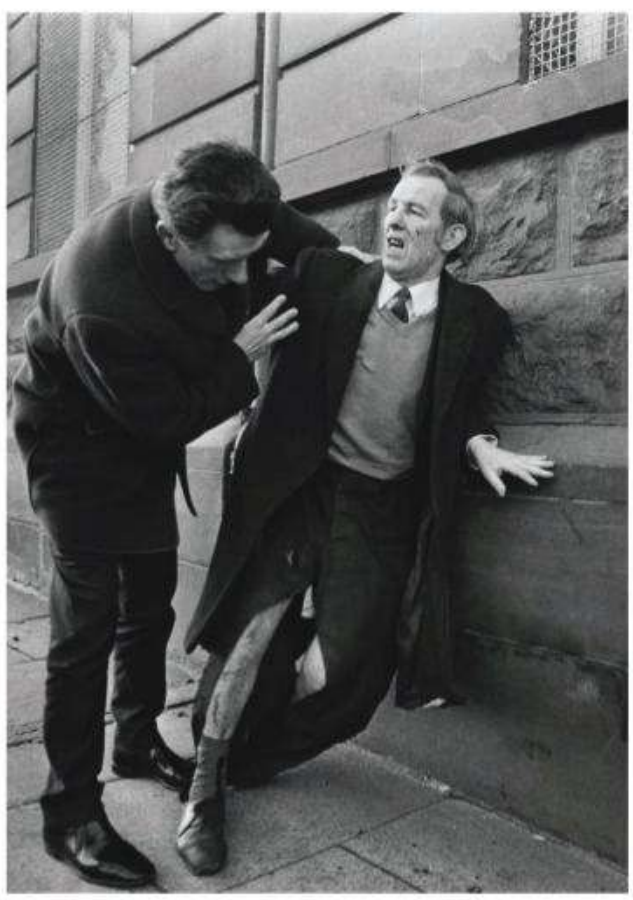
Bloody Sunday was a defining moment in the Troubles. As well as generating huge emotion, it also screamed a political challenge. Could there be dialogue? Could there be an attempt to try to bring together the British and Irish governments to talk about a potential political solution? Ultimately, that did gain momentum.

Another fundamental issue raised by the events was whether or not Northern Ireland could continue to be run by Northern Ireland politicians. Bloody Sunday led to the introduction of direct rule shortly afterwards.



The British embassy at Merrion Square in Dublin was set ablaze after Bloody Sunday. The shootings that day triggered protests across the Republic of Ireland

"Within a few seconds, soldiers had fatally shot in the back both 22-year-old Jim Wray and 27-year-old William McKinney"



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A wounded man in Belfast, 1972. This year proved "the worst year of the Troubles, with almost 500 people killed", including those who died during Bloody Sunday

Two boys by a wall with graffiti that says: "Join your local unit – IRA," in Belfast, 1972. Bloody Sunday sparked a wave of support for the organisation in Northern Ireland

Campaigners hold aloft banners depicting victims of Bloody Sunday, 2010. The Saville Inquiry found that those who were killed were unarmed and innocent

GETTY IMAGES

The episode showed that the complex situation in Northern Ireland was not being sufficiently controlled by unionist politicians, who had been dominating Northern Ireland politics since the foundation of the territory 50 years previously.

Two official inquiries into Bloody Sunday were subsequently launched. How did their findings differ?

In 1972, immediately after Bloody Sunday, Lord Widgery [lord chief justice at the time] was charged with the task of presiding over an inquiry into what had happened. At this point, there was a determined attempt to control the narrative from the British perspective, to show that what was done by the soldiers of the Parachute Regiment was a reaction to them being placed in mortal danger – that they were reacting to shots being fired by the IRA and they were not to blame. That narrative was sustained by the Widgery Inquiry, which ultimately became completely discredited.

Then, in 1998, the Saville Inquiry [officially the Bloody Sunday Inquiry] was launched. Unlike the Widgery Inquiry, it really gave weight to the personal testimonies of those who were involved in and impacted by Bloody Sunday. It found that firing by the British soldiers caused the deaths of 13 people and injury to a similar number, none of whom posed a threat, and that none of the soldiers fired in response to attacks or threatened attacks. Those killed were unarmed and entirely innocent.

After the findings of the Saville Inquiry were published in 2010, there was a very moving day when then British prime minister David Cameron unreservedly apologised for what had happened on Bloody Sunday, saying it was unjustifiable. That was a moment for which thousands had been waiting, for decades. Their reaction was very emotional, very dignified. In its own way it was also joyous – like the lifting of a suffocating weight that so many people had struggled under for so long. H

“There was a very moving day when then British prime minister David Cameron unreservedly apologised for Bloody Sunday”

Diarmaid Ferriter is a professor of modern Irish history at University College Dublin. You can listen to an extended version of this interview on the HistoryExtra podcast

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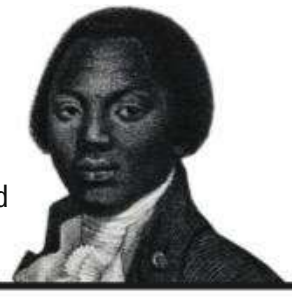
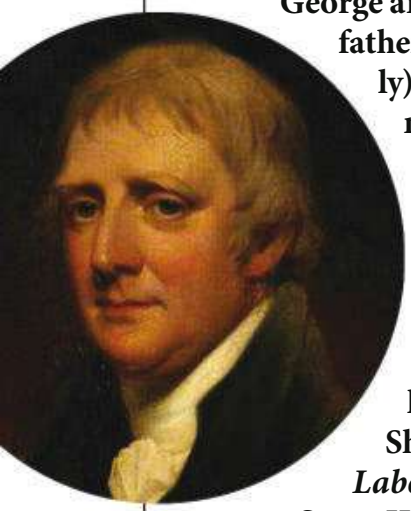


A contemporary portrait of Olaudah Equiano, whose faith is highlighted by reader Chris Hudson

LETTER OF THE MONTH

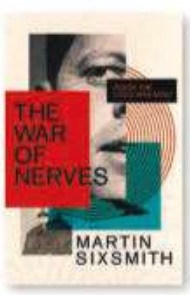
A tragic end

Readers who wish to learn more about the "calamitous labour" that resulted in the death of both Princess Charlotte and her son (*The Original People's Princess*, December) might consider visiting Croft Castle, a National Trust property in Herefordshire. Sir Richard Croft [pictured] was the 6th Croft Baronet, a doctor and "accoucheur" – what might be termed a "man-midwife". Despite both Princes George and Leopold (Charlotte's father and husband, respectively) telling Croft that he was not to blame, he took the tragedy to heart. After the death of another of his patients, in February the following year he put a pistol to his head and shot himself. Next to his body lay a copy of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* open at Act V, Scene II: "Fair sir, God save you! Where is the princess?"



At Croft Castle, above a memorial clock and busts of Charlotte and Leopold, is a post-mortem sketch of Sir Richard in his coffin after one by Sir Thomas Lawrence, with the head wound clearly visible. Croft's half-sister, who commissioned it, apparently considered the appearance too deathly, so Sir Thomas added a hint of rouge in an attempt to suggest sleep rather than death. Visitors may judge for themselves whether this was effective or not!

Dr Bernard Riley, National Trust volunteer, Croft Castle, Herefordshire



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **The War of Nerves: Inside the Cold War Mind** by Martin Sixsmith. You can read our review of the book on page 78

A nation in mourning

In Tracy Borman's feature on Princess Charlotte of Wales, she refers to the whole of the kingdom going into deep mourning for several weeks after the death of the princess. Indeed, the impact was felt as far away as the small parish of Llanfihangel Abercywyn, near St Clears in Carmarthenshire.

Joseph Evans, curate of the parish, recorded only four burials in 1817, two of which were of my 4x great grandparents Thomas and Margaret Griffith. Between David Roger, who was buried in October, and Ane Morgan, buried the following February, the curate recorded the following burial in the parish register: "Name – Princess Charlotte of Wales; When buried – 1817; Died the 7th, buried 19th Nov at St George Chap; Age – 22."

I find it very moving that not only was the princess's death felt in a location so remote from the court, but also that it was thought important to record her death among those of the local parishioners.

Gail Thomas, Perth, Australia

Divine inspiration

David Olusoga's excellent feature on Olaudah Equiano (*The Author of Abolition*, November) did not include one significant detail that transformed the career of this brave abolitionist. In chapter 10 of [his 1789 autobiography] *The Interesting Narrative*, Olaudah details a succession of spiritual encounters and conversations that led to some kind of Christian conversion experience in London.

This empowered him to not only overcome the terrors of his past life as an enslaved African, but gave him the means to challenge the Atlantic trade among his fellow believers, through the use of personal testimony interspersed with Bible texts. Towards the end of his *Narrative*, he quotes the Book of Proverbs: "It is righteousness that exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." Did the campaign for civil rights begin here?

Chris Hudson, Northumberland

History repeating

I was amazed by the letter from Bob Bass commenting on the value of studying history (December). I am sure many people know of the aphorism by writer and philosopher George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." If we do not know where we came from, or how our culture came into being, we would indeed be wandering in an unenlightened desert of the mind.

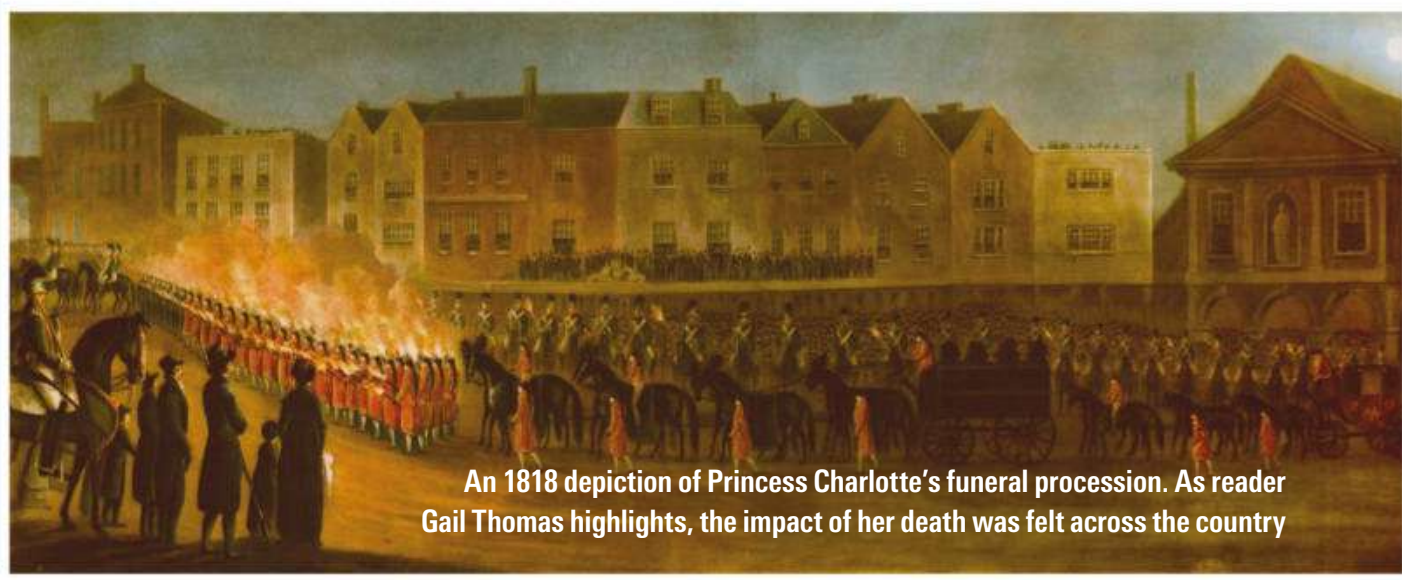
There are many warnings from history that can provide a guide as to how to avoid making the same mistakes over and over again, and not to know of their existence would be foolish indeed.

Colin Bullen, Kent

A deadly duel

Douglas Bell's letter in the Christmas issue reminded me of a tale I used to tell, when I worked as a guide at Eyam Hall in Derbyshire, of the death by sword in a duel of a distant relation of the house's owners. In 1765, William Chaworth had an argument with the "wicked" Lord Byron (great-uncle to the famous poet) about the best way to hang game – by the neck or by the feet. They were both in the Star and Garter public house in London, and probably somewhat drunk, when they challenged each other to a duel.

Byron ran the other through and he later died of his wounds, complaining that the room was small and dark. Duelling was illegal, so Lord Byron was charged, but tried in the House of Lords by his peers. He was found guilty but only fined £5. Proud of his feats, Byron hung the sword over the mantelpiece at Newstead Abbey, where it remains today. There is also a plaque



An 1818 depiction of Princess Charlotte's funeral procession. As reader Gail Thomas highlights, the impact of her death was felt across the country

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Archaeologist Mary Leakey in 1979, pictured holding a mould of an ancient footprint. Reader Charlotte Crutcher celebrates the work of such pioneering women in the field

GETTY IMAGES

in the pub to mark the event.

Duels with pistols continued, and were more deadly than sword fights – because, in the latter, a small scratch would satisfy someone's honour, whereas a bullet was more likely to be fatal.

Lois McGill, Derbyshire

Soil and sisterhood

As a 20-year-old female archaeology student, I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the article on female archaeologists (*Spades, Soil and Sisterhood*, December). This representation is wonderful in itself, but it also ignited a spark of pride in my own educational institution: the UCL Institute of Archaeology.

I'm happy to report that the archaeology department at UCL does indeed make a big deal of female archaeologists, both those of UCL and others – as well as the males. We are well-informed on the works of Tessa Wheeler, Kathleen Kenyon and Mary Leakey, and feel very proud of our institutional association with female excavators. In fact, one of my lecturers made a point of informing us about *Trowelblazers.com* during one of our earliest sessions.

Thank you for sharing this inspirational article, and here's to all the female archaeologists – past, current and future!

Charlotte Crutcher, London

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Vol 23 No 1 – January 2022
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› Page 60

Queen of spies

Victoria controlled an extensive network of intelligence sources that fed explosive revelations to the British government – or direct to her. **Rory Cormac** and **Richard J Aldrich** investigate her adventures in espionage

ON THE EH PODCAST

We've added a pair of 19th-century folding eyeglasses to Alexander Bassano's famous photograph of Victoria. By the time the photo was taken, in 1882, she had cultivated an impressive espionage network spanning Europe and beyond

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In early 1886, Lord Rosebery, the incoming foreign secretary, waited nervously to meet Queen Victoria. He was a liberal politician in his thirties; she had been on the throne for almost half a century. As the door swung open, Victoria – vastly experienced and unafraid to express her opinion – began lecturing him on exactly what his foreign policy should be. She "urged him not to bring too many matters before the cabinet, as nothing was decided there". Instead, he should "discuss everything with me and Mr Gladstone", the prime minister, privately. She told him that she "frequently had intelligence of a secret nature, which it would be useful and interesting for him to hear, and which came from a reliable source".

Queen Victoria recorded this extraordinary conversation in her diaries. Recently digitised, these paint the monarch in a remarkable new light, revealing her role as royal spymaster. Over her long reign, Victoria developed an extensive royal intelligence network involving her relatives across Europe, from Prussia to Spain. She used this royal intelligence to help successive governments manoeuvre in the complex world of 19th-century European politics.

At least, she did so when it suited her. Whenever ministerial policies clashed with her own dynastic interests, she did not hesitate to use these sources to outmanoeuvre her own governments. Far from the dour figure she's commonly portrayed as today, clad all in black and locked away at Windsor, Victoria was in fact an adept intelligence gatherer, a covert operator, an analyst and an intelligence consumer all rolled into one. She was the queen of spies.

Dark arts

Victoria was only 18 years old when she became queen in 1837, and had led a sheltered childhood. As she reached adulthood, though, her uncle Leopold, king of the Belgians, tutored her in some of the darker arts of foreign affairs. In one early lesson on deception operations, he told her that states often intercepted, read and resealed letters. As queen, Victoria could exploit this by writing letters in such a way as to send a deliberate message – accurate or otherwise – to an intercepting state.

For Victoria, this was personal. On taking the throne, she reigned over a vast chasm of spylessness. The Metropolitan Police did not create its first small detective branch until 1842, and the Secret Service Bureau, the forerunner of MI5 and MI6, was still decades away. Her public thought espionage too continental for their tastes, associating it with despots and secret police.

Victoria needed intelligence not only to protect her dynasty but also to protect herself

Foreign affairs
Lord Rosebery in the late 19th century. As foreign secretary, he was schooled by Queen Victoria in handling foreign policy and intelligence

Of course, Victoria herself had many continental connections – and she needed intelligence not only to protect her dynasty but also to protect herself.

In the early evening of 10 June 1840, a carriage carrying Victoria and Albert left Buckingham Palace through the garden gate. As they headed towards Constitution Hill, Victoria "was deafened by the loud report of a pistol". "Our carriage," she wrote in her diary that night, "involuntarily stopped."

On the path beside them she saw "a little man", his arms "folded over his breast, a pistol in each hand". Quickly, the attacker aimed again, and Victoria ducked as "another shot… equally loud instantly followed".

"My God!" Albert exclaimed, before quickly regaining his composure and turning to Victoria to tell her: "Don't be alarmed." She assured him that she was "not the least frightened" and, as police arrived to seize the assailant, Albert ordered the driver to carry on as if nothing had happened.

The queen was morbidly fascinated by the incident. Over the following days she played forensic detective, examining a nearby wall for bullet marks, speaking at length with the prime minister about the specific bullet used and the height and direction it travelled, and inspecting the pistols that "might have finished me off & perhaps Albert too".

She insisted on being updated about the investigation, and learned that the police

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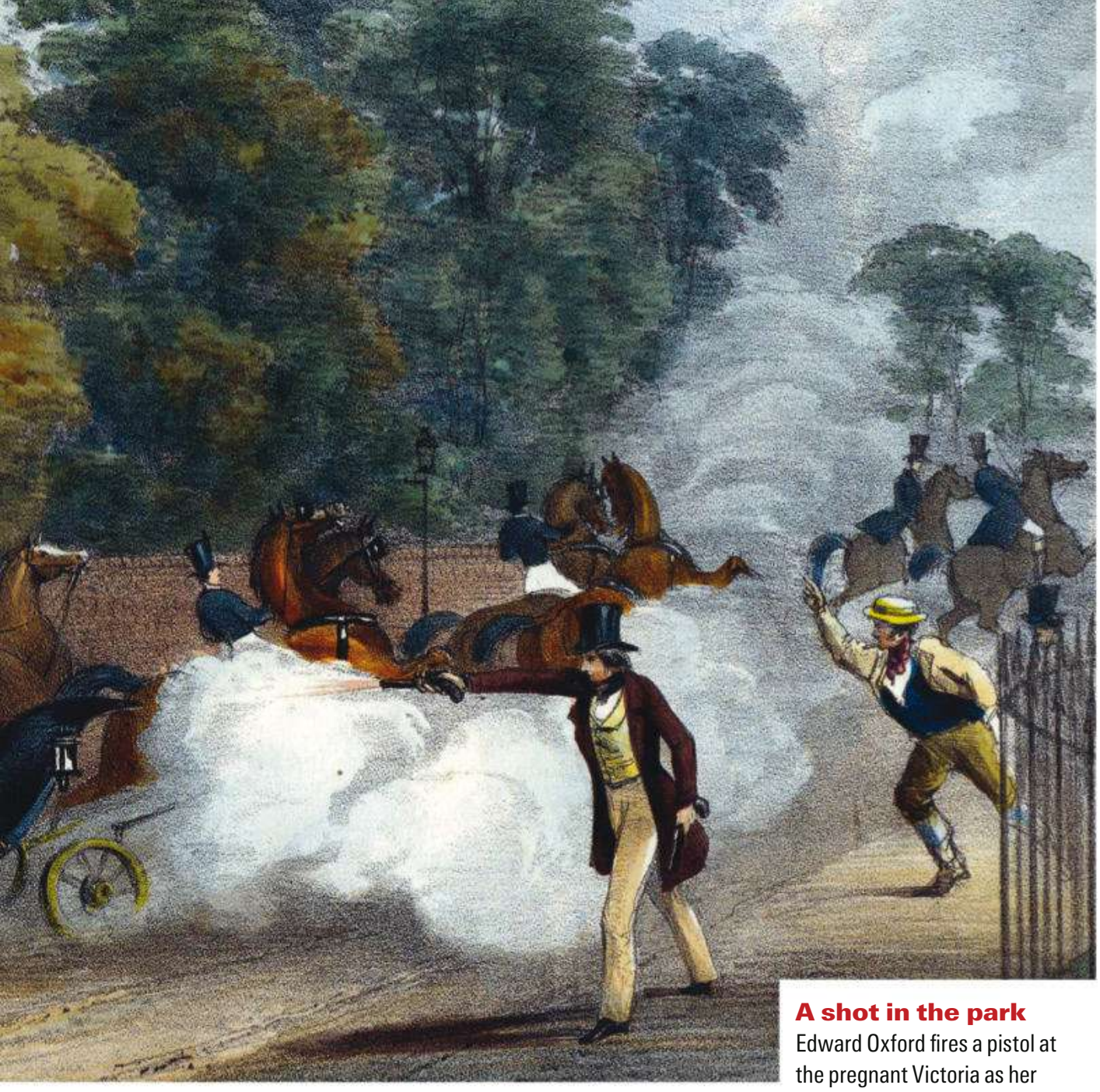


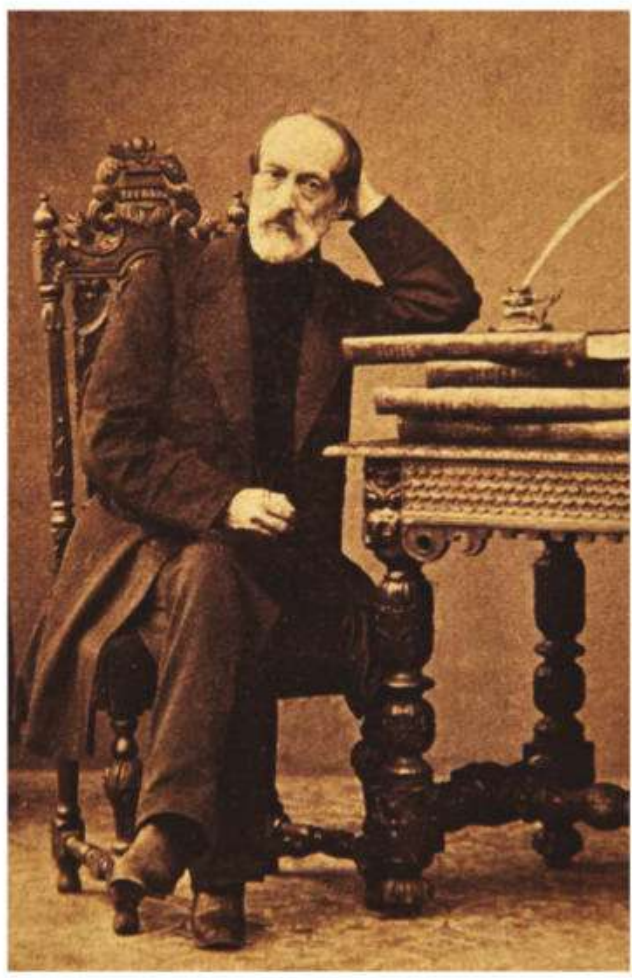
A shot in the park
Edward Oxford fires a pistol at the pregnant Victoria as her carriage passes Green Park in 1840. This failed assassination attempt fuelled the queen's interest in intelligence

had arrested a young man, Edward Oxford. Intriguingly, they also uncovered letters at his house about a revolutionary secret society named Young England. Oxford claimed that its 400 members included the king of Hanover – who would have assumed the throne had Victoria died – and even Lord Palmerston, the foreign secretary. It turned out to be a figment of his imagination, but it fuelled Victoria's interest in intelligence, secrecy and intrigue.

Read letter days

Four years later, as undercover policing was evolving in Britain, a major spy scandal erupted. Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian revolutionary living in London, was communicating with others fomenting revolt in Calabria. Convinced that the British government was opening his mail, he tested his theory by placing strands of hair, poppy seeds and grains of sand in envelopes, sealing them with wax and sending them to himself. Sure enough, they arrived sealed – but without their telltale contents. Incensed, Mazzini alerted a political ally, radical MP Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, who presented a petition about the issue to parliament.

As word of this incident spread, MPs expressed outrage about this political espionage. Such underhand practices, one thundered, were "singularly abhorrent to the genius of the English people". Soon the home secretary acquired the unflattering nickname "Fouché", after Napoleon's police chief who was infamous for his use of political spies.



Suspicious mind
London-based Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini, whose discovery that his letters were being intercepted sparked a major spy scandal

In the palace, Victoria was unmoved. She both sympathised with her royal relatives across Europe who faced violent republican revolutionaries, and was unsurprised by the exposés, having become an experienced reader of intercepted letters herself. She wrote in her diary that some were "most impertinent", others "curious", while some simply made her laugh. She just could not understand the hysteria provoked by the Mazzini affair, declaring that the home secretary "must have, in moments of difficulty", the ability to intercept letters.

At the time, republicanism was on the rise. By 1848, revolutions sweeping across Europe were existentially challenging monarchical rule. The British government adopted a position of procrastination and pragmatic neutrality, quietly enjoying the chaos in the capitals of its European competitors. Victoria, by contrast, was agitated. She read report after report from well-placed relatives describing murder across the continent, and worried about the ease with which the revolutions were unfolding.

She was particularly livid when she found out that Palmerston had authorised a covert operation to secretly sell arms to Sicilian rebels fighting against the king of Naples, scrawling in her diary that she was "startled [to learn that] this was done and sanctioned by Lord Palmerston!!" Her private sources told her that leaders across Europe now assumed Britain was covertly supporting rebellion everywhere. In damage-limitation mode, she pushed (albeit unsuccessfully) for Palmerston's resignation.

Victoria demanded that her government take the threat from revolutionaries based in London more seriously. Her royal intelligence – a network of agents, but also her family and friends across the European capitals, especially in Germany – warned her of "rumours of plots directed from London" aiming for the "assassination of all monarchs". Her relatives begged her to intervene and instruct her government to step up surveillance or deportation. After hearing of violence in Vienna, she feared for her "dear ones" stuck in the "possession of the mob", and didn't mince her words: "These horrible Republicans should be exterminated."

Frustrated at the lack of action, Victoria increasingly turned to her own sources whenever her dynastic interests clashed with those of the government. In the late 1850s and 1860s, this led her to use a rather special spy in the palace in Prussia. After her eldest daughter, Princess Victoria ("Vicky"), married the future king of Prussia and German emperor Frederick ("Fritz") in 1858,

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she began sending back sensitive material from the Prussian court, giving Victoria an advantage over her ministers.

When war broke out between Denmark and Prussia in 1864 over the disputed regions of Schleswig and Holstein, Victoria used her royal intelligence network to run rings around her government. Palmerston intended to intervene in support of Denmark. Victoria's sympathies lay with the Germans and, desperate to avoid war with Prussia, she insisted that Palmerston tone down his threats in defence of Denmark.

Vicky's intelligence proved invaluable in helping the queen rebuff calls for British intervention. She sent bundles of sensitive material on Prussian plans, the progress of battles and weather conditions, and even letters written by her husband's aide-de-camp. Attempting to undercut rival intelligence channels, Vicky criticised information Britain had gathered through the Foreign Office. She told her mother that the ambassador in Berlin "understands nothing whatever of German affairs", was "continually misinformed" and used "bad sources".

Victoria's sources extended beyond her immediate family. She also drew on intelligence from Laurence Oliphant, a celebrated mystic, author and traveller, who spent time in Schleswig-Holstein and then with Vicky in Prussia before reporting back to the queen in person at Windsor Castle.

She even had her own spy inside the cabinet. Lord Granville was a former foreign secretary who became lord president of the council, a role that brought him into regular contact with the queen. He discreetly reported individual ministers' opinions back to the palace without their knowledge.

Armed with the latest intelligence and a mole in the cabinet, Victoria managed to persuade the government not to intervene militarily in support of Denmark. In October 1864, Denmark ceded Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia and Austria.

Vicky's intelligence became more alarming. She warned about the growing power of Otto von Bismarck, minister-president of Prussia. He manipulated the Prussian king and, by 1866, intended to provoke a war with Austria. The Foreign Office were completely in the dark on the matter, underscoring the importance of royal intelligence.

Indeed, Vicky's intelligence proved to be highly accurate, and so sensitive that she started writing in a code to which even the Foreign Office did not have access. Queen Victoria also began to receive a flood of letters from royal houses across Europe, warning that war was becoming more likely. The duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, for example, boasted of "confidential and trustworthy" contacts in Vienna and Berlin keeping him up to date with "the most secret proceedings".

Continental clash Austrian forces battle Danish troops at Königshügel on 3 February 1864 during the second war over Schleswig and Holstein. Queen Victoria used intelligence to avert British intervention in the conflict

Intelligence from Victoria's daughter was so sensitive that she started writing in a code to which even the Foreign Office did not have access

These communications bypassed the British government – much to the frustration of the foreign secretary. Without telling ministers, Victoria warned the Prussian king about Bismarck's ambition and deception. "You are deceived," she wrote, continuing: "you are made to believe that you are to be attacked, and I your true friend and sister hear your honoured name attacked and abused, for the faults and recklessness of others – or rather more of one man." She insisted the message be hand delivered to evade Bismarck's spies.

Victoria had assessed the incoming royal intelligence astutely and, fearing war, pressed for intervention. By contrast, diplomats in the Foreign Office clung to the wishful assumption that Germany was heading irreversibly towards liberalism. They failed to properly understand Bismarck, and insisted that war would not break out.

Against Victoria's wishes, the cabinet advocated strict neutrality. On this occasion, Victoria was not able to persuade them to change their minds. War broke out in June 1866; seven weeks later, it ended in Prussian victory. Even so, Victoria continued to argue against isolationism. She told the foreign secretary that she would share "any private intelligence which she may receive" – or rather, in truth, she would share any intelligence that backed up her stance.

Playing the Great Game

Victoria was less well connected when it came to Russia and the "Great Game" of empire. When her second son, Alfred, married the tsar's daughter Maria Alexandrovna in 1874, she hoped for similar inside information on the Russian court. Unfortunately, their union did not result in the same kind of intelligence coup achieved by Vicky. For one thing, it was a less-happy marriage, and the couple spent little time in Russia. Alfred managed to supply only the odd titbit from time to time.

Instead, Victoria took a close interest in a different kind of spy: the traveller-cum-adventurer-cum-soldier. One such was Frederick Burnaby, who provided intelligence from the imperial frontline. In the autumn of 1875 he travelled across Russia and central Asia on horseback, evading the twin dangers of Russian officers and frostbite.

On his return to Britain, Victoria summoned him to Windsor to be regaled with tales of his adventures and to hear his intelligence on the Russian threat. The queen listened avidly, agreeing vociferously with his characterisation of Russia as duplicitous and dangerous. In 1877, he sent more intelligence

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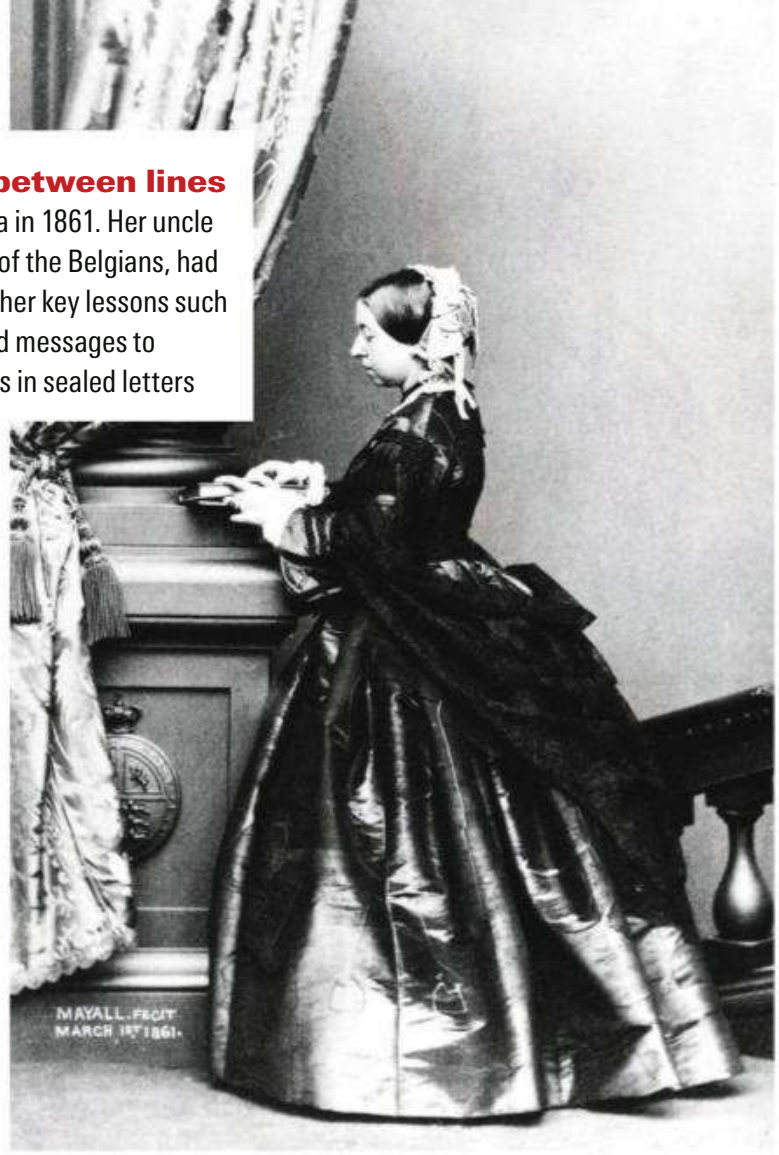
From Prussia with love
Queen Victoria's daughter Vicky, pictured in 1888. Having married Prussian crown prince Fritz (later German emperor Frederick III), she passed important intelligence to her mother over many years



Reading between lines
Queen Victoria in 1861. Her uncle Leopold, king of the Belgians, had earlier taught her key lessons such as how to send messages to foreign powers in sealed letters

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Eyes on the front line British army officer and adventurer Frederick Burnaby, depicted in an 1870 portrait. The queen recruited Burnaby, who travelled across central Asia in 1875, to provide intelligence from the front line on the threat from Russia during the "Great Game" – the tussle between the empires for influence in Asia

back from the frontline when Russia declared war on the Ottoman empire.

Russia moved troops into the Balkans, leaving Victoria convinced that it had Constantinople firmly in its sights. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, more trusting of the tsar, took Russia at its word – that it would stop short of the Ottoman capital. Armed with royal intelligence, Victoria thought she knew better. This time her secret source was Arthur Balfour Haig, equerry to her son Alfred. She passed the intelligence on to Disraeli – while keeping the source secret – and melodramatically warned that if the Russians reached Constantinople, she "would be so humiliated that she thinks she would have to abdicate at once".

Throughout the Turko-Russian conflict, the queen was fiercely bellicose towards Russia. Shamelessly, she scoured her intelligence to cherry-pick information, which she then used to manipulate her government into remonstrating with the Russians. On one occasion she quoted a vague report indicating that some source had supposedly heard that Russian artillery had fired on ambulances. This was hardly a slam-dunk, and neither the prime minister nor the foreign secretary was aware of it. So their subsequent admonition of the Russians was, according to her private secretary, "entirely the queen's doing".

Demanding ever more intelligence, the queen put constant pressure on the government. The wife of one minister complained that Victoria had "lost control of herself, badgers her ministers and pushes them towards war". The queen even accused the foreign secretary's wife of leaking secrets to the Russians, and urged Disraeli to "be bold", but the cabinet was split. In particular, the foreign secretary was reluctant to get involved.

So Victoria turned to her own covert diplomacy. She sent an unofficial message to the tsar, warning that Britain would intervene militarily if Russia attacked Constantinople. She had not consulted the foreign secretary, so the message deliberately exaggerated Britain's position – it was a royal bluff. The tsar ultimately backed down, but not until his armies were just days from Constantinople.

"No punishment is bad enough"

By 1881, assassination was back on the intelligence agenda. Victoria was getting older and approaching her golden jubilee when news reached her of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II by revolutionaries. "No punishment is bad enough for the murderers," she wrote in her diary. "Hanging is too good."

Though the conspirators had no connection to Britain, the assassination resurrected the thorny issue of London's disinclination to spy on political discontents. Sympathising

Strategic union
The queen's second son, Prince Alfred, with Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna of Russia. Despite their marriage in 1874, he obtained little useful information

Rise of republicanism
Frédéric Sorrieu's 1848 work *The Universal Democratic and Social Republic* lauded the wave of political upheavals across Europe that Victoria feared

Empire under threat
A painting of a battle between Russian and Ottoman troops during the war of 1877–78. Victoria used intelligence to push the British government to intervene

Fearing the anarchist threat, Victoria became an impressively early advocate for international cooperation in counterterrorism

with beleaguered sovereigns, Victoria wanted to evict all refugees from Britain. The prime minister, Gladstone, was horrified by this very un-British suggestion. However, the anarchist threat only grew and, within the following two decades, terrorists killed French president Sadi Carnot (in 1894) and Empress Elisabeth of Austria-Hungary (1898). Victoria remonstrated that Britain's willingness to allow "these monstrous anarchists and assassins to live here and hatch their horrible plots in our country" was doing the government "incalculable harm abroad".

In response, she became an impressively early advocate for international cooperation in counterterrorism. Influenced by the queen's lobbying, in 1898 the British prime minister, the Marquess of Salisbury, sent a delegation to a conference in Rome to discuss just that.

Although Britain abstained from many of the votes, its delegate did agree to increase intelligence sharing across borders. Victoria knighted him for his services.

When Victoria died in 1901, she had spent more than 63 years on the throne. She had enjoyed a remarkable career in her own secret service, of sorts. She had demanded intelligence, wined and dined spies, and conducted her own DIY intelligence analysis – albeit not very objectively. Far from being isolated from politics, Victoria persistently berated ministers, pressing them to be tougher on surveillance. She insisted on access to intelligence received by her ministers, while developing her own private networks that she used to outmanoeuvre her governments. As her reign progressed, she increasingly saw security policy as her own fiefdom. She used intelligence to pursue her own interests, creating tensions between the crown and ministers in the process. Knowledge, after all, is power. H

Rory Cormac is professor of international relations at the University of Nottingham. **Richard J Aldrich** is professor of international security at the University of Warwick. Their new book, *The Secret Royals: Spying and the Crown, from Victoria to Diana*, published by Atlantic Books, is available now

LISTEN Learn more about the queen's life in the BBC Radio 4 series **Encounters with Victoria**, presented by Lucy Worsley: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0004sd5*

BBC RADIO 4

THE DOWNFALL OF THE QUEEN'S 007

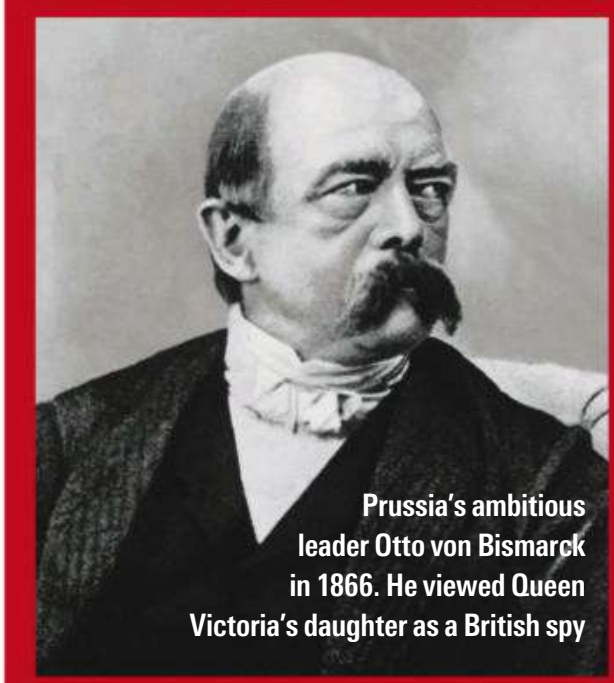
How Vicky's battle of wits with Bismarck ended in failure for the British agent

Princess Victoria (known to her family as Vicky), wife of the Prussian crown prince Fritz, was one of her mother's most prized assets in intelligence gathering. And Prussia's ambitious minister-president Otto von Bismarck was under no illusions about her. He saw Vicky as nothing less than an English agent, and interpreted her intimacy with Queen Victoria as potentially treasonous.

He had a point. Vicky wrote to her mother: "I send you *all the papers* so that you may see what Fritz has done, said and written!" As his influence grew, Bismarck sought to freeze her out. Under constant surveillance from his spies, Vicky, Fritz and the queen increasingly communicated by cypher.

Those efforts became futile as Vicky and Fritz were cut out of the inner circle and their letters contained ever less-sensitive information. By the end of the 1880s, Vicky warned Queen Victoria that Bismarck's "creatures" had infiltrated her entourage. When she returned from one trip abroad, she discovered that someone had broken into her rooms and searched her desks and filing cabinet.

As tensions grew, the British ambassador warned Vicky not to write anything incriminating on paper. The best spy in Britain's royal intelligence network had been neutralised, and Victoria's ability to outmanoeuvre her government dramatically declined.



Prussia's ambitious leader Otto von Bismarck in 1866. He viewed Queen Victoria's daughter as a British spy

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

A KING OF FIR

French ruler Louis IX was a Catholic hero and a vicious anti-Semite, a patron of exquisite art and a fervent burner of books. **Matthew Gabriele** and **David M Perry** consider the tangled legacy of a man who embodies both the horrors and beauty of medieval Europe

ON THE EH PODCAST

Saint and sinner?
Louis IX depicted in an illuminated manuscript from the 13th century. (The background image shows the stained glass of Sainte-Chapelle, his private chapel.) Some eight centuries after his birth, the French king's reputation is more contested than ever

ALAMY/DREAMSTIME

E AND LIGHT

It's a beautiful spring day in Paris sometime in April 1248 as sunlight streams through the south-facing windows of Sainte-Chapelle. Natural light tangles with the glow of countless candles and smoke traces the lines of the stone as they vault towards the ceiling. Fire and light, a radiant king dressed in gold, the relics of Jesus's crucifixion gleaming on the altar making the case that Jesus himself now resides in Paris, a new Jerusalem, the new centre of the world. But light can consume even as it illuminates, it can guide the harvesters who take in the wheat, and it can burn that which they consider weeds.

It's another beautiful day in June 1242 and a crowd has gathered across the Seine from the Île de la Cité, almost directly opposite the nearly completed cathedral of Notre Dame, its stone towers visible above the warren of wooden structures along the right bank of the Seine. Perhaps that crowd could even catch sight of the king's palace, the site that would become Sainte-Chapelle. What lit this crowd was not the sun, but rather a great fire. The people in the Place de Grève, a great plaza and site of public executions in the medieval city, had come together not to burn bodies but to burn books – 24 cartloads of a text deemed dangerous and heretical: the Talmud.

It's June 2020 and about 200 people have gathered in the heart of St Louis, Missouri, an ocean and a world away from 13th-century Paris. Here, opposing factions shout at each other in front of the Apotheosis of King Louis IX (pictured over the page), a statue of the king mounted on horse, in armour, sword in hand but pointed downwards so that the hilt forms a cross. One faction demands the statue comes down, moving in harmony with the uprising that began in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, citing the medieval king's violence against Jews and Muslims. The other prays with their rosaries, accompanied by a priest who blesses the statue with a supposed relic of the king and saint. At one point members of a motorcycle gang, one with a long history of alleged criminal activity, step in between the factions to supposedly keep the peace.

Messy in the middle

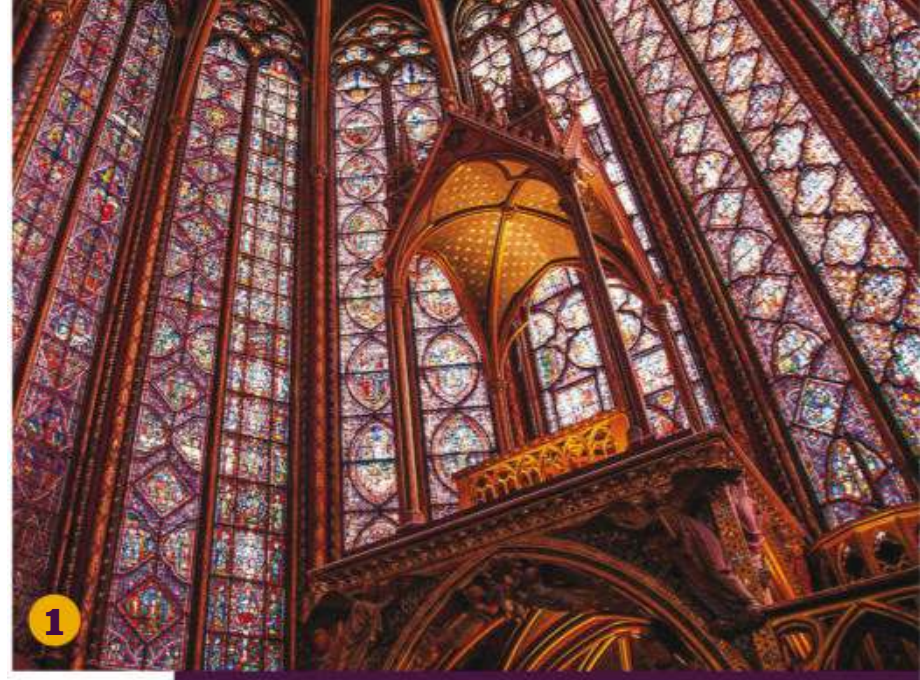
The life, death and afterlife of Louis IX reveals the paradox of fire and light of medieval Europe. As *The Bright Ages*, our new history of medieval Europe, narrates, this was no Dark Age, but a human age, with all the beauty and horror contained in any era. But how both beauty and horror manifest, how the messiness in the middle unfolds, does change from era to era, and perhaps nothing embodies both extremes more than the story of this French king and saint. He was a "good" Christian king according to his own merits, with both great acts of charity and financial support for magnificent churches and works of art that we rightly cherish today. He also waged war in north Africa on behalf of Christianity, consumed by the confidence that his violence against Islam would earn him treasures in heaven. And to finance his campaigns, to attempt to unify his kingdom under a more cohesive Christian identity and maintain the support of church leaders, Louis persecuted the Jews.

In 1239 Pope Gregory IX asked rulers throughout Christendom to investigate a book for possible heresy. The pope was concerned the book deviated from biblical truth. Most ignored the papal request, but the young Louis IX of France responded enthusiastically and commissioned a tribunal in 1240. The queen mother presided. The chancellor of the University of Paris, alongside the bishop of Paris, the archbishop of Sens, and several friars would lead the prosecution.

This was the early era of the papal inquisition, but that body – formed in the wake of a war against the so-called Cathars in southern France – was specifically designed to locate Christian heretics. Here in Paris, however, the defendants were rabbis, facing the charge that Jews who used the Talmud – a collection of commentary of law and tradition critical to the development of medieval rabbinical Jewish practice – were heretics from what the pope considered "biblical" Judaism.

The outcome of the tribunal, of course, had a foreordained conclusion, with the Jews of Paris never given a chance to prevail. Medieval Jews had a theoretically protected status in European Christian kingdoms, but one always bounded by intellectual antagonism that could – and often did – quickly slip into physical violence.

The Jews, according to Christian thinkers like the fifth-century Augustine of Hippo, proved the truth of Christianity through history; Augustine pointed to the Jews' servitude across the Mediterranean and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans, all as God's punishment for the failure to accept Jesus. As the historian David Nirenberg has shown, medieval Christians believed that Jews needed to be reminded of



1 The stained-glass windows of Sainte-Chapelle. Louis ordered that each window be adorned with the fleur-de-lis – symbol of French royalty – signalling the king's proximity to God

2 When Louis IX acquired sacred artefacts including relics from Christ's crucifixion, they were placed in Sainte-Chapelle, the royal chapel in his palace in Paris

3 Books burn in a woodcut from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, 1493. The fervour with which Louis destroyed texts he deemed to be heretical has cast a long shadow over his legacy

4 In this 14th-century illumination, a blindfolded woman represents the blindness of the Jewish faith to the Christian "truth". For Louis, persecuting France's Jews was politically expedient and religiously meritorious

Louis was confident that his violence against Islam would earn him treasures in heaven

3

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

4

that subservience, often through violence: harassment, segregation, sometimes assault and murder – and, in this case, book burning.

Indeed, the Christian judges agreed that the Talmud was blasphemous and should be banned, its copies burnt. So in June 1242, hundreds, if not thousands, of manuscripts were brought to the Place de Grève, stacked in a pile, and set alight. The fire likely burned so high it may have reflected off the stained glass of Notre Dame across the river. Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg, who himself witnessed the event, would lament later in the 13th century, that "Moses shattered the tablets, and another one then repeated his folly/ Burning the law in flames…/ I witnessed how they gathered plunder from you/ Into the centre of a public square… and burned the spoils of God on high."

Rabbi Meir, in anguish, related that the fire that burned so high, so brightly in the City of Lights, that it paradoxically "leaves me and you in darkness".

More than seven and a half centuries later, across the ocean in Missouri, these and other acts of persecution were much on the mind of the protesters who wanted to take down the king's statue. His defenders, though, weren't thinking of burning books, but of light streaming through glass windows. Both are part of the history, though the beauty of the latter does nothing to offset the horror of the former.

Christ comes to Paris

And what Louis built was indeed beautiful. As he took the throne early in the 13th century, Notre Dame was slowly rising into its full medieval shape, enabled by the new "gothic" style. It was an architectural approach that soared, with ceilings in the nave of churches towering above everything else in their medieval cities. Pointed arches and exterior supports, known as "flying buttresses," relieved the weight of the ceiling and distributed it outwards allowing the walls to move from solid and fortress-like to ethereal and light. In a world made of wood, stone impressed; but for a world before electricity, more important was light. This wasn't a world lit only by fire, but one illuminated by the sun. Allowing sunlight inside, allowing an interior to gleam, was to capture something of the divine. So, heavy stone walls were replaced by translucent and radiant coloured glass.

Notre Dame was one example but that belonged to the bishop of the city, and the king wanted something grander. Even before the building was completed, King Louis needed a new kind of sacred space – not a cathedral for an archbishop or a palace to glorify a king, but a home for the King of Kings himself. In that year, Louis had scored a coup, purchasing relics of the Passion in a complicated debt-relief deal for the beleaguered Latin empire of Constantinople, itself a hybrid realm in a Byzantine empire torn apart by civil war and threat of invasion. And so by helping the Latin emperors financially, Louis IX acquired the most sacred objects in Christendom, first and foremost among them the Crown of Thorns.

It wasn't unusual for relics, even important relics, to be transferred or translated from place to place. But the translation of the Crown of Thorns, wood of the True Cross, and other relics associated with the Passion, exceeded these traditions by an order of magnitude. Medieval Christians, perhaps like all people, lived not only in the physical world, but also a bigger imaginary geography

not bound by the ordinary rules. When a sacred object moves, it drags the world with it and makes re-ordering possible. And so Louis and his supporters could argue that the centre of the Christian world – that Christ himself, that Jerusalem itself – had come with those relics to reside in Paris.

About a year after its purchase, the Crown of Thorns was welcomed into Paris in 1239 with a solemn procession led by the king. One of his early biographers, Geoffrey of Beaulieu (as translated by Larry F Field), wrote of the event: "And with what joy did our devout king journey out to reverently take possession of these said relics! And again, with what solemn devotion did all the clergy and populace receive in procession at Paris these valuable relics, when the king himself, barefoot, bore on his own shoulders for some way this sacred treasure!" The procession stopped at Notre Dame, but only briefly. It had a different final destination: the king's private chapel in his palace, at that time dedicated to St Nicholas.

The "holy chapel", which is what Sainte-Chapelle means, was a special place in all ways. Legally, the pope had exempted it from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Paris. It was the private chapel in the palace, but the general public celebrated special feasts in the palace courtyard and inside. Within, on the upper floor, the medieval people of Paris and beyond would have seen walls almost entirely made of stained glass. Brilliant blues and reds made the gold of the reliquaries sparkle, illuminating on their own the vibrant paintings that adorned the walls.

And of course the paintings were not random or decorative; they told a story about God and kingship. They told the biblical story of Israel, beginning with Genesis and continuing through the Gospels. The story of the crucifixion appears directly above the altar where the relics were kept. But then the narrative continues on the south wall to tell a story of kings – those from ancient Israel, and then Louis IX himself and the story of the arrival of the relics to Paris. Every window is adorned with the fleur-de-lis of the kingdom of France. The message wasn't subtle. Kings, not priests, are closest to God here.

In 1240, the sentence against the Talmud was pronounced. But the burning that would occur over a year later almost didn't happen. All history is about contingency, about decisions that might not have been made, or how things could have gone differently. The archbishop of Sens, the most powerful among the judges at the "trial", interceded. The papacy said that now the Talmud was to be censored of "offending" material, but not banned, nor burned.

But Louis was set on his course. Cartloads of the Talmud arrived at the Place de Grève in 1242. Louis IX seems to have believed that a "most Christian" king had a special responsibility to God to care for his people and that responsibility required zeal. The king was to be zealous in caring for the poor and ensuring that justice was done. For example, according to one of his hagiographers, "when a famine once befell parts of Normandy, he designated such a large supply of money for the poor of that area that, just as from there was usually brought to Paris a treasure of revenues in coffers and wagons, now by contrast just as much money was carried back from Paris in boxes and vehicles for distribution to the poor". That hagiographer further explained that Louis himself washed "the feet of the… poorer and older men who could be found, which he did on bended knee, humbly, piously, and in a most secret place… In similar fashion he brought water to wash their hands, which he kissed in the same way. He then provided a certain sum of money to each, and he himself waited upon them as they ate."

Being zealous meant not only helping his

GETTY IMAGES/ BRIDGEMAN AND DREAMSTIME

5 Louis receives the Crown of Thorns in a 14th-century manuscript. With such sacred objects in his possession, the king now claimed Paris was the centre of Christendom

6 Florid accounts of Louis feeding the poor and washing their feet – as depicted in a 15th-century chronicle – burnished his reputation as a "good" Christian king

7 Louis is brought before his captors during his disastrous military expedition to Egypt. The French king eventually bought his freedom but his next crusade, in 1270, would end in his death

8 The Apotheosis of King Louis IX stares out over the city of St Louis in Missouri. To some, this monument is a source of pride; to others, it's a symbol of violence and bigotry

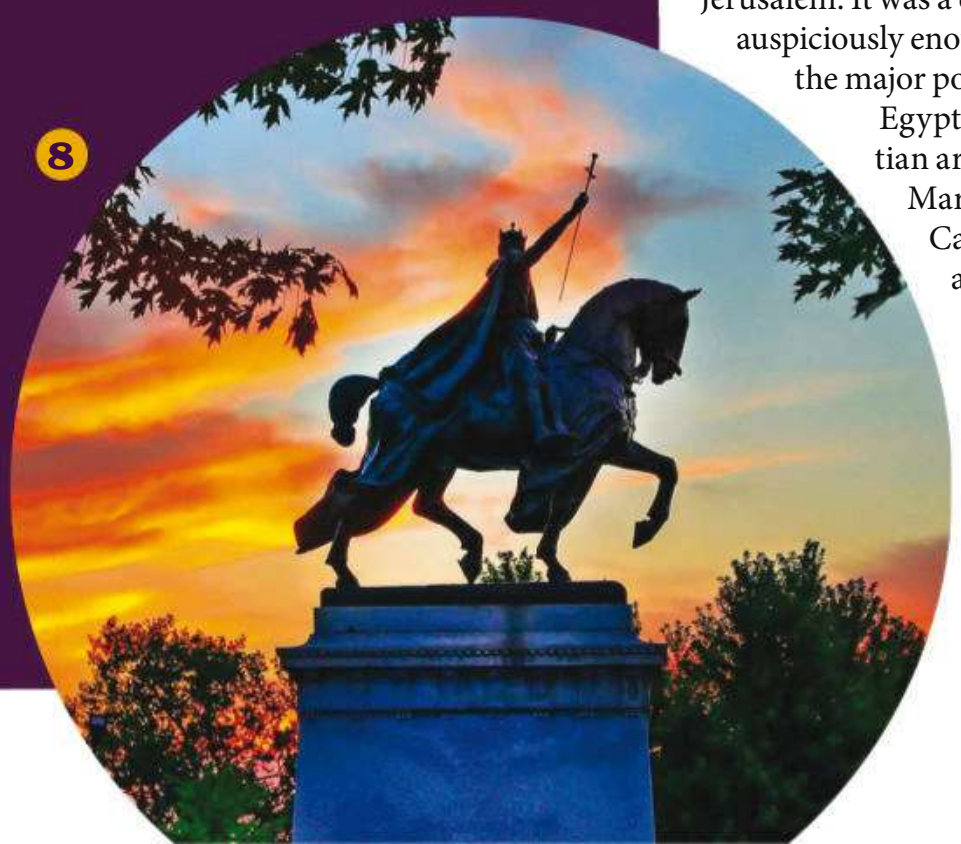
7

fellow Christians, but also struggling against those seen as God's enemies. Louis would continue his persecution of the Jews, threatening to arrest all French Jews and confiscate their property in 1268. This didn't happen but Jews were formally segregated from Christians in 1269, and forced to wear a yellow or red badge on their clothes. The world had to be purified.

The legacy of Louis IX must hold all of that complexity, all of his humanity – as saint and monster

A crusader's death

It's also not a coincidence that, in the wake of the burning of the Talmud, even before Sainte-Chapelle was consecrated, Louis resolved to launch a military expedition to Egypt with the ultimate goal of taking Jerusalem. It was a disaster, even if it started auspiciously enough with the capture of the major port of Damietta in Egypt. Egypt was hot, and the Christian army was prone to disease. Marching up the Nile towards Cairo, Louis' army found its advance hindered by the annual flood of the great river. Louis was captured by the Mamluk general Baibars and had to pay a vast ransom, including the return of Damietta, for his release. However, the king would earn no such reprieve during his next crusade – launched in 1270 – dying from dysentery shortly after landing in Tunisia. The sheer force of Louis' desire to rid the world of heretics had cost him his life.



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The statue of St Louis sited in middle America – in the heart of the city that was named in his honour – remembers all parts of that medieval king. Erected in plaster for the 1904 World's Fair, it was recreated in bronze in 1906 as a gift to the city, perhaps part of a larger trend of Civil War statuary being constructed at the same time. But it wasn't formally designated a city monument until 1971, during the creation of a special cultural district encompassing the zoo and art museum.

The statue stood, and still stands, as a civic symbol, a point of pride for many – and, through the king's formal canonisation, an important focal point for parts of the city's Catholic community. But everything has a history. The event that created this particular statue, the 1904 World's Fair, was notorious for its racism against black and Native Americans. As a monument to civic pride, an avatar in some ways of the city itself, the statue carries with it a long history of violence against black and Native Americans, most recently the police shootings of Michael Brown and Anthony Lamar Smith. Monuments, like people, are complicated; what some see as a point of pride, are to others sites of great shame.

The legacy of Louis IX helps us understand why that is. His legacy must hold all of that complexity, all of his humanity – as saint and monster. Does the fire in the Place de Grève change how we must see the beauty of Sante-Chapelle, how we imagine candlelight and sunlight mixing – as the latter passed through the glorious coloured glass, the pinnacle of gothic art? Does Louis' violence against minority communities challenge his sanctity, even as that violence was explicitly celebrated by the papacy during his canonisation? It must, because the man and his actions were real.

As writers and historians – one Jewish, one Catholic – we both find ourselves able to remember the crackle of burning pages and wonder at the beauty in the chapel. It's in this duality – the messiness of real people who lived in the past – that we found the bright ages, illuminating our own study of the past. H

Matthew Gabriele is a professor of medieval studies at Virginia Tech. **David M Perry** is a freelance journalist. Their book *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe* is published by Harper in January 2022. You can listen to them discuss the legacy of Louis IX on our podcast soon: *HistoryExtra.com/podcast*

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

Why did Henry VIII never secure a diplomatic marriage for his daughter Mary?

It wasn't for lack of trying. Daughters might have been disappointments to a king desperate to bolster his dynasty with a male heir, but they were still useful for forging treaties with foreign princes.

At the tender age of two, Mary was promised to the infant son of her father's great rival, Francis I of France, but that agreement fell through. In 1522, the princess was contracted to marry her first cousin, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V; she was just six years old, while he was 22.

Then Charles broke off that engagement, so Henry swiftly resumed negotiations with France. Yet again, his efforts came to nothing, and in 1528 the English king changed tack, mooting his 12-year-old daughter as a potential bride for another cousin, James V of Scotland.

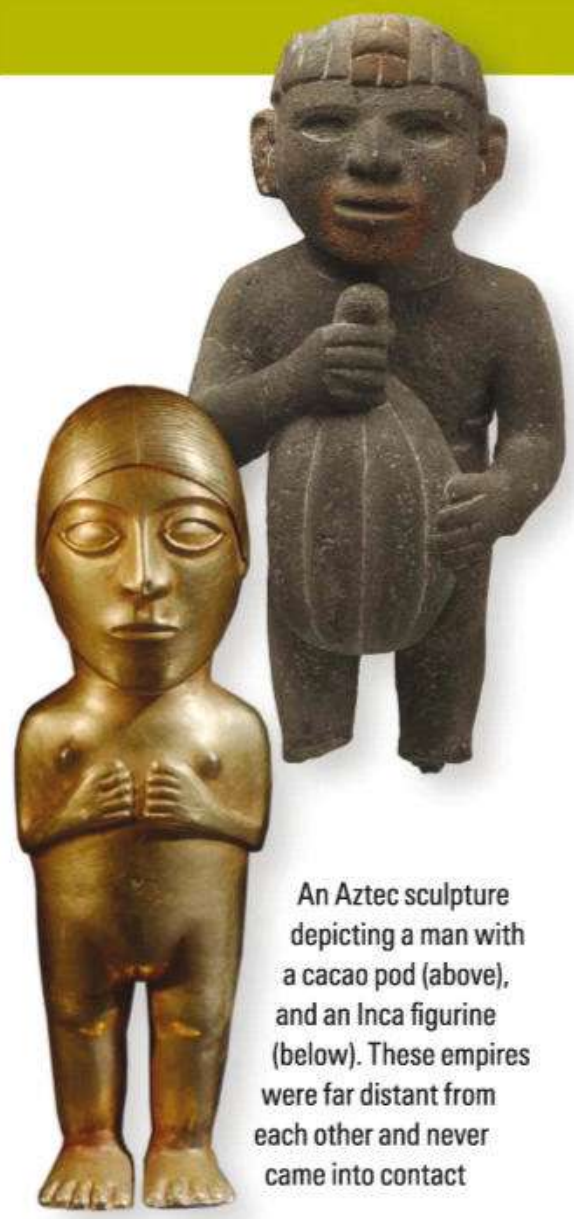
By then, Mary's parents' marriage was in crisis, with Catherine of Aragon looking increasingly likely to be supplanted by Henry's great obsession, Anne Boleyn. The king finally secured an annulment in 1533 and married his already pregnant paramour. Though Anne, too, gave Henry only a daughter (Elizabeth), Mary's stock on the international marriage market plummeted.

The fact that her mother's marriage to the king had been declared null and void effectively rendered Mary illegitimate. There was little more talk of suitors until she was finally able to take matters into her own hands, having ascended to the throne in 1553. But the world of 16th-century betrothals was a small one – and one of her first acts as queen was to marry Philip of Spain, son of erstwhile fiancé Charles V.

Tracy Borman, historian, broadcaster and author whose books include *The Private Lives of the Tudors* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2016)

A portrait of Mary Tudor, painted in 1544 when she was 28. Suitors dried up after the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon was annulled, and Mary wed only after becoming queen

BRIDGEMAN



An Aztec sculpture depicting a man with a cacao pod (above), and an Inca figurine (below). These empires were far distant from each other and never came into contact

Did the Incas and Aztecs know about each other?

It seems extraordinary that two such remarkable – and in some ways similar – empires could co-exist at the same time and not know about each other. But, although both covered huge distances in pursuit of trade opportunities and power, there is no evidence that these civilisations ever encountered each other or even knew of the other's existence.

What's often forgotten is that the distance between the Aztec and Inca realms is perhaps 2,000 miles as the crow flies, and much further on foot through the mountainous terrain of Central and South America, passing through territory that now belongs to at least eight different nations. (In the 16th century, it would have been many more.) So, although Spanish invaders saw them both as part of the nebulous "Republic of Indians", and these great civilisations are often lumped together in the popular imagination today, they were in reality very distant.

Caroline Dodds Pennock, senior lecturer in international history at the University of Sheffield

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When were cats first associated with witchcraft?

Aloof, beautiful and with vermin-killing superpowers, cats have long been seen as supernatural beings. In ancient Egypt, they were sacred to the goddess Bastet. And several Greek goddesses, including Hekate and Artemis, were associated with cats.

Like many other symbols from pagan religions – sacred groves of trees, holy springs and standing stones, for example – cats provided priests with a conundrum when Christianity was establishing itself in early medieval Europe. Did their special status in some religions make them offensive to Christians?

The Bible provided no guidance. All the available evidence suggested that ancient Judaism tolerated cats, and that Christians should, too. However, during 13th-century persecutions of "heretics" such as the Cathars and Waldensians, stories began to circulate that the devil appeared in cat form and was worshipped by these supposedly anti-Christian groups. Satan was portrayed as a black, furry animal with blazing eyes that, to some at least, looked feline.

True, the devil was also imagined as a lion, dog or goat. But when the hunt for anti-Christian heretics was extended to the pursuit of anti-Christian witches, the association with cats became more prominent. Those suspected of witchcraft were often housewives or widows with vermin-catching pets, and their cats were persecuted, too. In 16th and 17th-century Britain, North America and parts of Europe, cats were thought to be "familiar spirits" to witches: little furry devils who helped these spell-casters do harm.

By the start of the 17th century, stories of witches' cats were widespread – they even appeared onstage in *Macbeth* (1606) – and the link between cats and witches was firmly established.

Marion Gibson, historian specialising in witchcraft, and author of *Witchcraft: The Basics* (Routledge, 2018)

DREAMSTIME/PUBLIC DOMAIN

DID YOU KNOW...?

When bunnies beat Boney

Napoleon Bonaparte was once forced into retreat by rabbits. In 1807, the French emperor decided to celebrate the signing of the Treaties of Tilsit with a rabbit hunt. His men gathered together bunnies in their hundreds (if not thousands, according to some accounts). Rather than run away, though, the creatures bounded towards Napoleon and his guests, quickly surrounding them. Napoleon had to flee to his carriage.

An 1807 rabbit hunt ended in ignominy for Napoleon

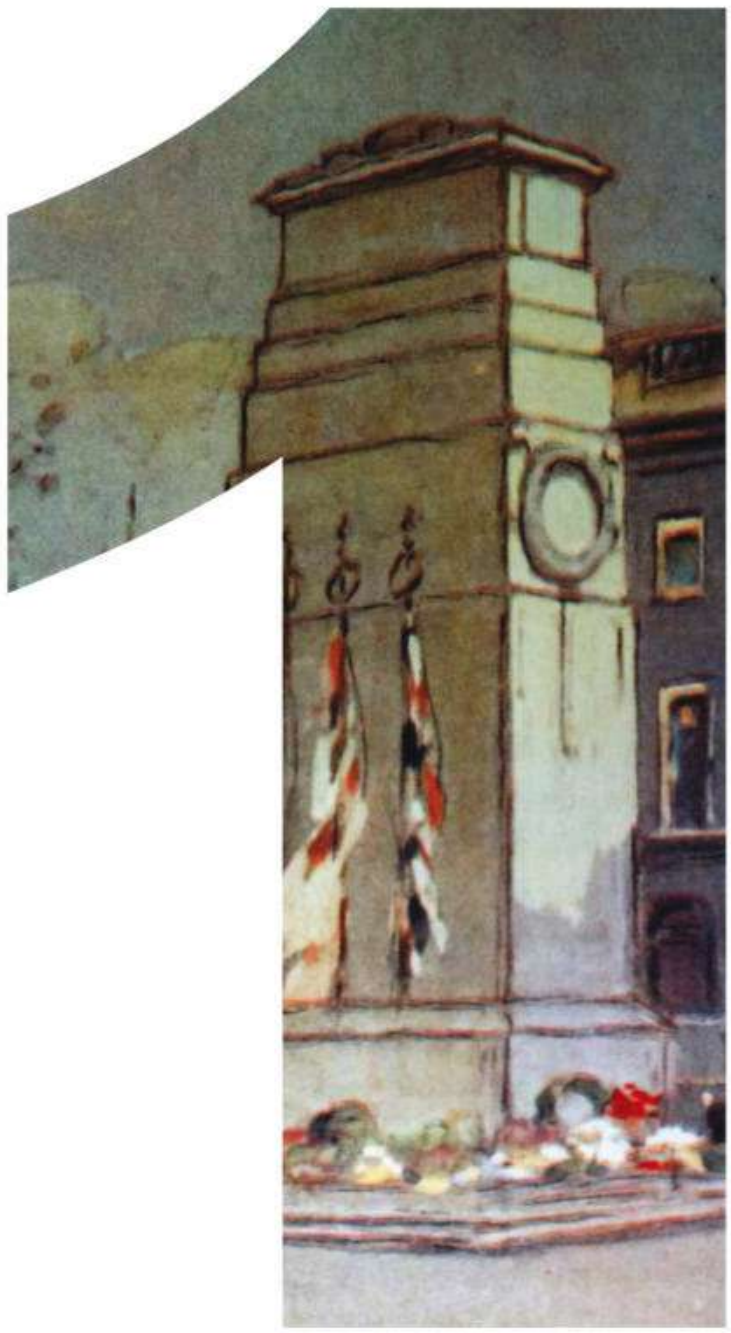
Royal dentistry

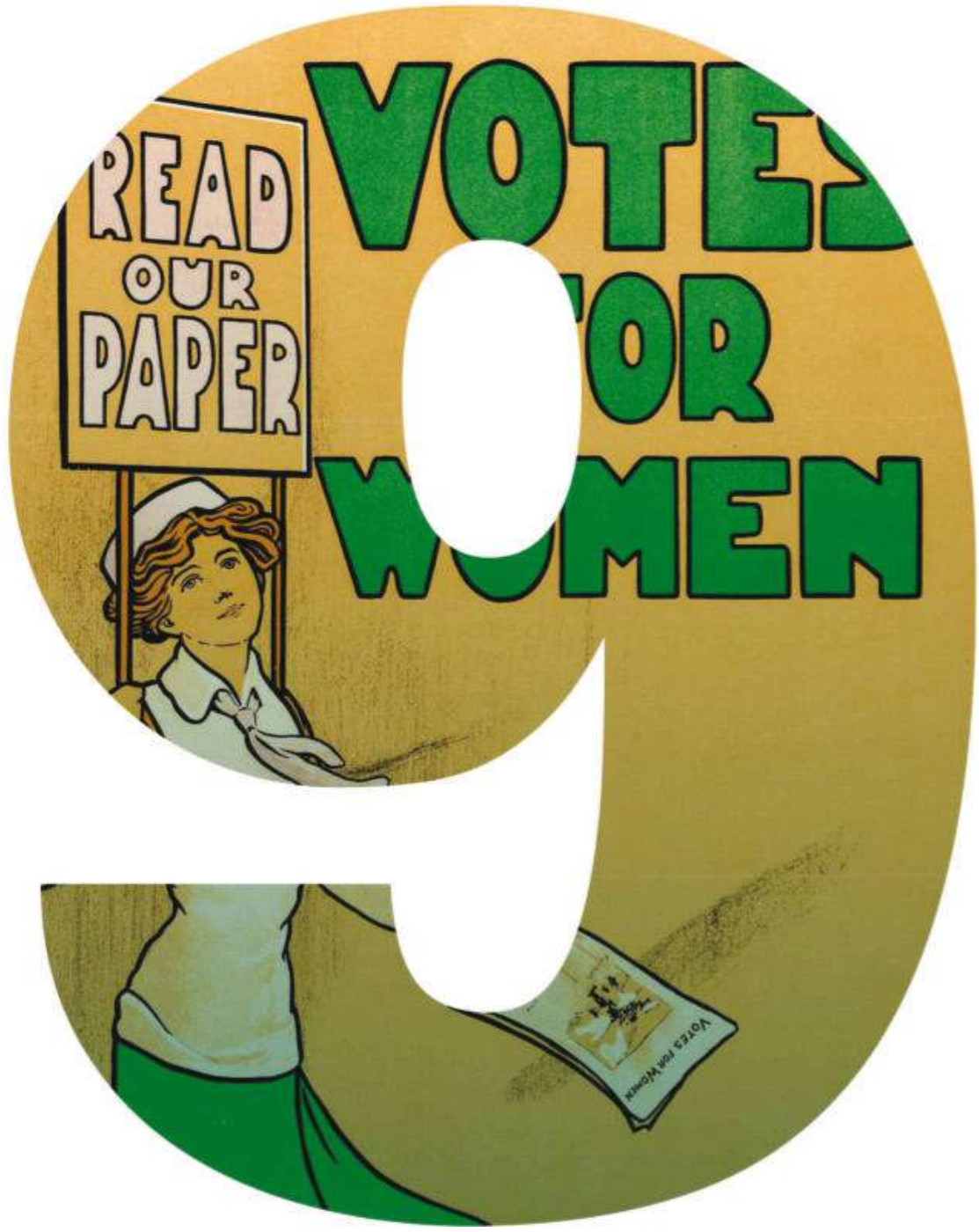
Scottish king James IV paid people to let him take out their teeth. Fascinated by surgery and dentistry, in 1511 he bought a pair of pincers for extracting teeth. The royal accounts state that 14 shillings were paid "to Kynnard the barbour for twa teith drawn furth of his hed by the king". James also founded the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

The baby Hitler hoax

In 1933, several American newspapers published the same photo of a scowling baby, purportedly showing Adolf Hitler at the age of one. This came as a surprise to Mrs Harriet Downs of Ohio, who recognised the infant as John May Warren, her son from a previous marriage, retouched to make him look more sinister (see image below). The photo agency that supplied the picture later issued a correction, conceding that young John "looks nothing like Hitler". H

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history





A BRAVE N

Past and future
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: A coloured sketch of the Cenotaph in Whitehall, which was unveiled in November 1920; a poster calls for "votes for women"; miners depicted in a London, Midland and Scottish Railway poster from the 1920s; an illustration shows flappers wearing their signature knee-length dresses

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/MARY EVANS

EW WORLD?

Could a nation traumatised by war truly let its hair down and embrace the possibilities of peace? With the 1921 census of England and Wales due to be released this month, **SARAH HELLAWELL** takes Britain's temperature at the dawn of the "roaring" twenties

It was a year of hope. It was a year of regret. It was a time of boundless optimism at the possibilities offered by peace. It was a time of almost unimaginable grief at the ravages of the First World War. It was a "roaring" year of dancing and decadence, flappers and frivolity. It was a year of social unrest and guerrilla war. It was a brave new world of motor cars and disposable income. It was a world of grinding poverty and industrial collapse.

1921 may appear ever more distant as we advance further into the 21st century. Yet this January that year will be thrown into sharp focus once more – thanks to the release into the public domain of the 1921 census for England and Wales.

The census promises to unlock a treasure trove of information about what life was like in Britain a century ago. It was the largest survey of its kind yet, posing Britons questions about everything from their professional occupation and educational background to marital status. And the government didn't intend to simply collect this information and set it aside to gather dust. Instead, it promised to use that information as a force for good, announcing (rather grandly) that the census would facilitate plans "for the betterment of social and national conditions", informing policy on everything from pensions and unemployment insurance to housing, schools and transport.

Not everyone was thrilled at the prospect of offering up personal information to faceless government officials. Yet, for all that, the press and public in 1921 do appear to have been genuinely fascinated by what the census would reveal about their country. One newspaper even declared that "we want to know where we stand after years of war such as were never experienced before".

And it's that very sentiment that makes 1921 such a fascinating year to look back upon from today's perspective. Where *did* Britain stand as it attempted to come to terms with one of the most traumatic conflicts in its history? What was the mood of a populace grappling with the issues of commemoration and grief, while looking to strike out and grab the opportunities provided by the postwar world? And did Britain really "roar" at the dawn of the 1920s?

Faces of the future
Pupils at a Manchester school in 1921. The government promised that the census would inform policy on everything from pensions and housing to education

Emblem of the fallen

Whatever hopes Britons invested in the future, there was no escaping the fact that 700,000 men had lost their lives during four years of conflict. Surely no section of the 1921 census captures the human cost of the war better than the one that asked which Britons had suffered the death of a parent.

No section of the census captures the terrible cost of the war more than the one dedicated to the death of a parent

The death toll was inevitably reflected in one of the census's headline findings: population size. The census established that the population in England and Wales (the just-formed Northern Ireland had no census that year and Scotland had a separate census) stood at around 38 million – the largest ever recorded. However, this was only a 1.8 million increase on 1911, the smallest growth in a century – a product of the death toll and lower birth rate brought about by the disruption of the war years.

With the death toll being so high, it was surely inevitable that remembrance would become an integral part of British life. In November 1921, the Royal British Legion sold 9 million red poppies as an "emblem of the fallen" in the run-up to armistice day. Formed six months earlier as an amalgamation of existing ex-servicemen groups, the Legion provided support for ex-service personnel (of whom 1.75 million lived with injuries or disability) and their families.

A sharp economic downturn and rising unemployment levels in the immediate postwar years meant that many of those who had served in the armed forces were out of work in the early 1920s. "The longed-for and dearly bought peace was a profound disappointment," observed the author and war poet RH Mottram, capturing the dissatisfaction felt by many ex-servicemen that their peacetime jobs were not accompanied by a higher status or wage. In response, ex-servicemen's associations, charities and government schemes aimed to support veterans' rehabilitation into society.

Although personal remembrance of the fallen had begun long before the war ended, it was in the early 1920s that official commemorations became part of the fabric of public life. Local communities, churches and schools unveiled plaques and monuments and, in November 1920, the Cenotaph was unveiled on Whitehall. That same year, the unknown warrior was buried in Westminster Abbey, while the Belgian marble

GETTY IMAGES

Lest we forget
A cigarette card shows the British Legion parading past the Cenotaph in Whitehall. Remembrance was integral to British life in 1921

Bitter victory
Men protest about high unemployment rates among ex-servicemen, c1920–23. "The longed-for and dearly bought peace was a profound disappointment," wrote the war poet RH Mottram

tablet that covers the grave was unveiled during the 1921 Armistice Day service.

Rife brutality

Conflict on the continent may have come to an end, but that didn't mean that the United Kingdom was entirely at peace. From January 1919 to July 1921, war raged in Ireland as the nationalist campaign for independence escalated into outright hostilities.

This was a war that had been brewing for years. Irish nationalists had been agitating for greater self-determination since the 19th century – a campaign that culminated in the Easter Rising of 1916 and declaration of independence. Two years later, Sinn Fein leaders ratified the Proclamation of the Irish Republic following their electoral success at the general election.

Meanwhile, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) prosecuted a guerrilla conflict against the British authorities. David Lloyd George's government responded by sending in new recruits for the Royal Irish Constabulary. These were the feared Black and Tans (so named after the mismatched colours of their uniforms), a unit chiefly made up of ex-servicemen returning from the frontline.

Brutality was rife on both sides of the conflict. In fact, so bloody did the fighting become that British women in the Labour party were moved to condemn the terror directed against Irish women and children. In doing so, they drew similarities with the "the devastated regions in France and Belgium" under German occupation in the First World War.

1921 was a transformative year for Ireland. By the end of the year, the Anglo-Irish War was over and both sides had agreed to come to the table. On 6 December, an Irish delegation headed by Arthur Griffith, founder of Sinn Fein, reached a deal with David Lloyd George in London. Following a night of high political drama, the two parties signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, not only creating the Irish Free State but also allowing for partition, as the six counties of Ulster opted to remain part of the union with Great Britain. The island of Ireland now consisted of two very different political entities, and has continued to do so ever since.

TRAILBLAZERS OF 1921

The birth control pioneer

The Mothers' Clinic for Constructive Birth Control opened on 17 March 1921 in Holloway, a working-class area of north London. Its founder, MARIE STOPES, sought to make the use of birth control within marriage respectable and to ensure "joyous and deliberate motherhood".

The clinic was free and open to all married women to provide education. Three years earlier, Stopes' book *Married Love* had become a best-seller. Although her legacy has been damaged by her eugenicist views, Stopes was a pioneer in women's sexual health education.

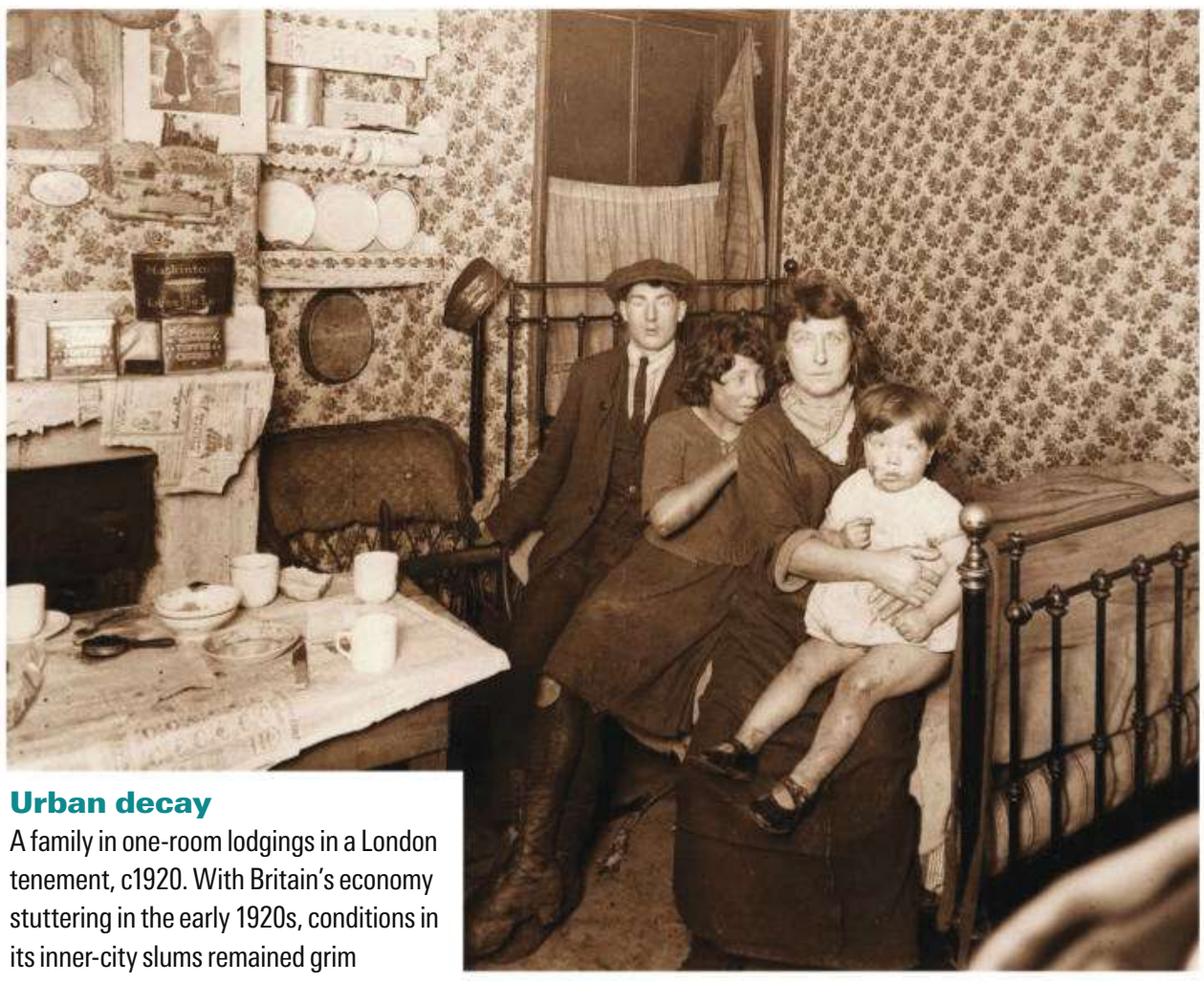
Economic jolts

England, Wales and Scotland were largely spared the political turmoil and bloodshed endured by the people of Ireland. But, all the same, 1921 was a year of great hardship for many families. Although most people equate economic depression with the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash in 1929, Britain was jolted by a series of economic shocks in the early 1920s. And, for all the lofty postwar rhetoric of building "homes fit for heroes",

GETTY IMAGES/LOOK AND LEARN

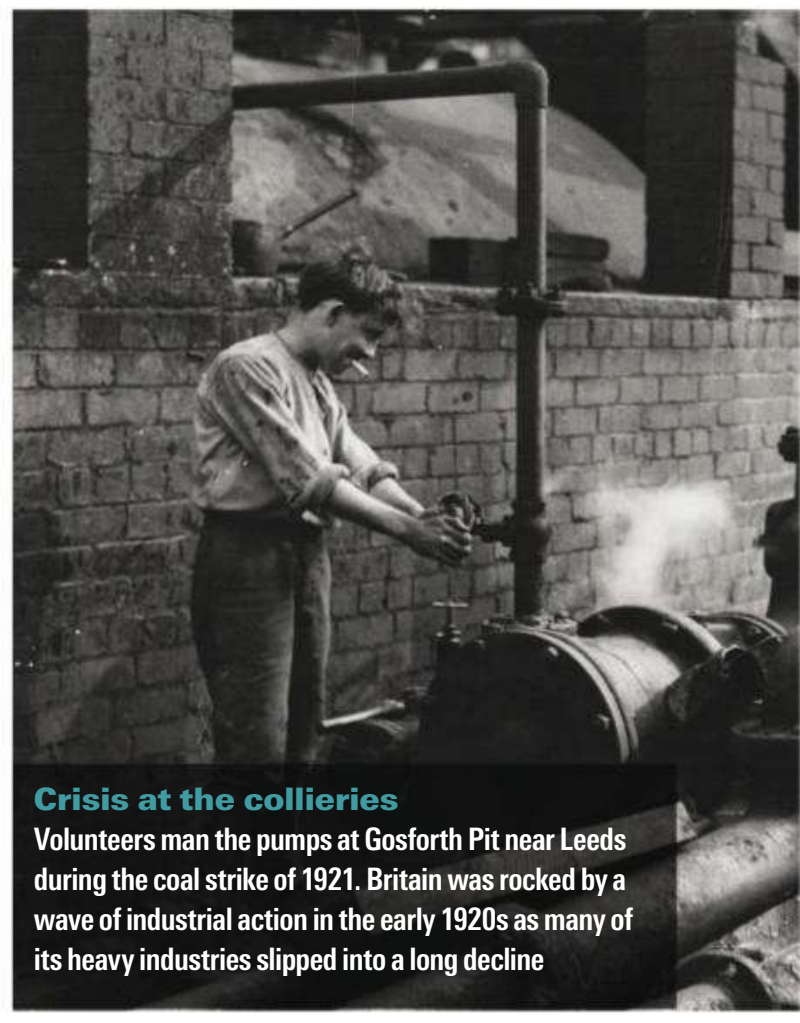
A bloody divide

Republicans demonstrate against the execution of IRA volunteers by the British government, Dublin, 1921. The brutal two-year Anglo-Irish War culminated in 1921 with the partition of Ireland



Urban decay

A family in one-room lodgings in a London tenement, c1920. With Britain's economy stuttering in the early 1920s, conditions in its inner-city slums remained grim



Crisis at the collieries

Volunteers man the pumps at Gosforth Pit near Leeds during the coal strike of 1921. Britain was rocked by a wave of industrial action in the early 1920s as many of its heavy industries slipped into a long decline

GETTY IMAGES/MARY EVANS/BRIDGEMAN

One mother reported feeling miserable and "worn out with struggling in these wretched rooms"

living conditions in Britain's inner-city slums remained, for the most part, grim. One London mother reported feeling disheartened, miserable and "worn out with struggling in these wretched rooms". A woman from south Wales told the Trades Union Congress that "she would like to hand over all my family for a while to those in power to see if they could feed them on the money I get".

The waning of traditional heavy industry and rising foreign competition inevitably led to unemployment in key sectors – and that triggered widespread industrial unrest. Coal mining had been a staple industry of prewar Britain and the main source of employment in parts of the north-east of England, Yorkshire, south Wales and Scotland. By the early 1920s, a deeply uncomfortable truth was dawning on the industry: it was clearly struggling to replicate its 19th-century success.

During the First World War, the government had nationalised the mining industry, deeming coal production essential to the nation's survival. On 31 March 1921, however, it placed mining back in the hands of private owners – a move that had dire consequences for industrial relations. Miners' wages were cut, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain called for a strike and, faced with the prospect of the National Union of Railwaymen and the National Transport Workers' Federation also striking in sympathy, David Lloyd George employed the Emergency Powers Act to recall troops.

In the end, transport workers and railwaymen chose not to join the strike, and a mass walk-out of more than 2 million workers didn't materialise. The nightmare scenario of a general strike in 1921 never came to pass, but the threat of mass disruption had implications for the timing of the census, which was postponed from April to June.

The party decade?

When the census did eventually go ahead, it revealed an "excess of women". Given the huge death toll of the First World War, this was hardly surprising. All the same, to reporters and establishment figures alike, this was a cause of great concern. In fact, so worried was the political establishment by the prospect of female voters being in the majority that, in 1918, it had seen to it that the franchise was limited to women over the age of 30.

Despite such moves, suffragists were determined to build on the hard-earned gains of the war years, and continued to lobby MPs to extend the franchise to all women, demanding "that they should now be allowed their share of the responsibilities of citizenship".

Suffragists remained a force to be reckoned with in 1921 and would continue to be so throughout the twenties. But if one group of women was to come to epitomise the decade more than any other, it was surely the "flappers". Casting off the limitations of the

TRAILBLAZERS OF 1921

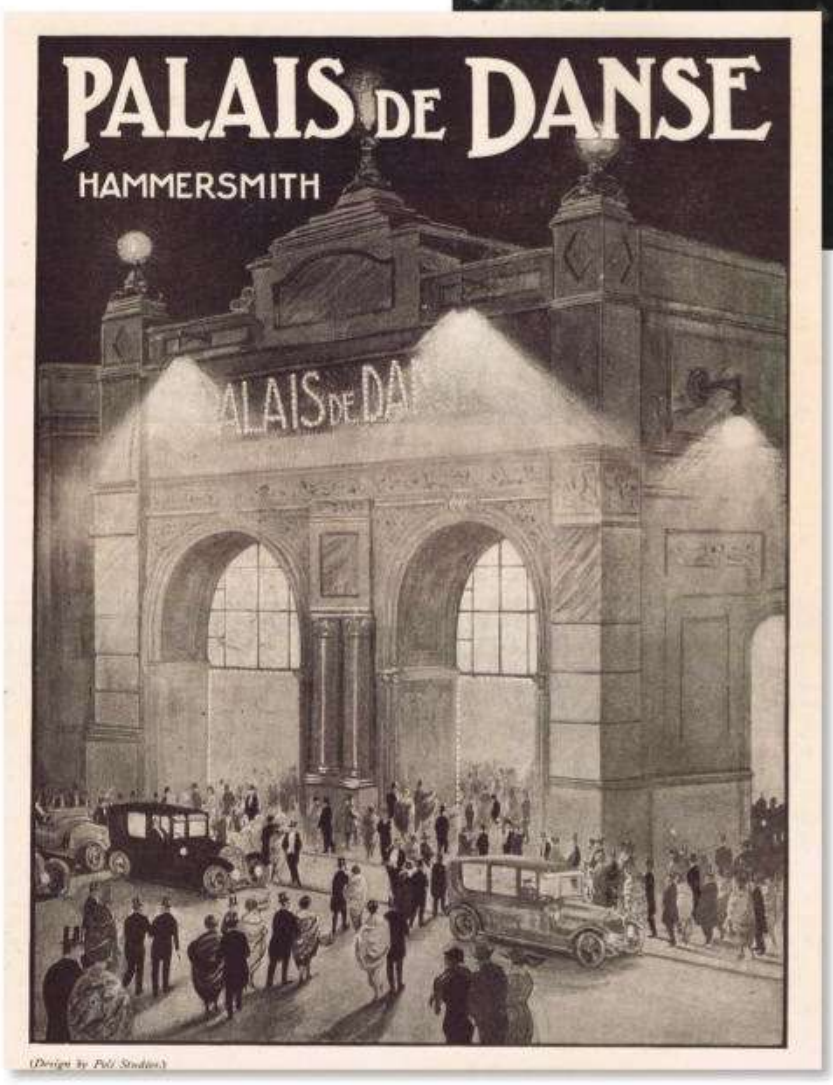
The political leader

The second woman to take up a parliamentary seat in the House of Commons was elected on 22 September 1921 at a by-election in Louth, Lincolnshire. MARGARET WINTRINGHAM was the first British-born woman to sit in the Commons, as Sinn Fein member Constance Markievicz abstained from taking her seat and Nancy Astor hailed from Virginia, USA.

Wintringham was active in both the Liberal party and the women's movement, using her position to lobby for equal franchise, equal pay and widows' pensions. In her maiden speech to parliament, she argued that women "feel that the best investment for the nation at the present time is good education and good health".

Licence to party
Nightclub owner Kate Meyrick (seated, centre) at a welcome back party in London's Silver Slipper Club to mark her release from prison, 1928. Meyrick was jailed a number of times for serving alcohol without a licence

Night on the tiles
Young Britons, eager to let their hair down following the privations of war, flocked to venues like Hammersmith's Palais de Danse, shown in an advertisement from 1921



Flappers drank alcohol, smoked cigarettes, partied hard – and challenged stereotypes of femininity

Edwardian period, these young women came of age during the postwar period.

The stereotypical flapper wore her hair bobbed, her hemline short and her waistline dropped. She drank alcohol, smoked cigarettes, attended outrageous parties and danced to jazz. In short, she challenged accepted norms of femininity. As a result, she was soon perceived as a threat, arousing fears of sexual immorality and the Americanisation of British culture.

Thanks, in part, to the rise of the flappers, the 1920s will always be remembered as a party decade. Modern popular culture has certainly bought into this image, with TV series such as *Peaky Blinders* glamourising a golden age in which Britain apparently "roared". Countless column inches have been dedicated to the Bright Young Things – a set of young socialites who partied hard, and became a media obsession in the process.

The 1920s was indeed a decade when nightclubs boomed and jazz culture, imported from the USA, swept British cities. A key moment in the birth of Britain's jazz age arrived on 27 August 1921, when the government relaxed the wartime Defence of the Realm Act restrictions, loosening regulations on the sale of alcohol. The early 1920s saw

TRAILBLAZERS OF 1921

The radical reformer

In September 1921, 30 councillors from Poplar – including GEORGE LANSBURY, a radical social reformer – were imprisoned for their roles in resisting central government taxes. Poverty was rife in this East End borough, and Poplar's councillors argued that rates should be spread equally across the London boroughs. From prison, Lansbury wrote to the home secretary, Edward Shortt: "I am guilty of no crime, but find myself treated as such."

After almost six weeks, the councillors were released and parliament passed a new bill to alter the rates. Lansbury went on to serve as leader of the Labour party between 1932 and 1935.

TOPFOTO/GETTY IMAGES/MARY EVANS

Screen icons
The Tooting Electric Pavilion advertises films featuring two of Hollywood's biggest stars, Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin. INSET: Chaplin stars alongside Edith Wilson in *The Kid*, the second highest-grossing film of 1921

Kate Meyrick, the so-called "Night Club Queen", opening a series of clubs in Soho (and, despite the easing of restrictions, receiving numerous prison sentences for serving alcohol without a licence).

Meanwhile, hundreds of dance halls popped up across the country, and jazz bands, described by one dancer as the "essence of happiness and jollity", toured the nation. One young man in Newcastle upon Tyne described going to the local "Palais de Danse" on a Saturday evening and watching the "moving sea of dancers coagulated in front of the stage".

Screen idols

Despite these descriptions of dancing and decadence, in reality most Britons in 1921 let their hair down not in a nightclub, but in a cinema. The 1920s was a golden age of Hollywood, and in working-class communities many people went to the pictures more than once a week, even during the depression at the end of the decade. One unemployed worker from Lancashire captured the mood perfectly when reporting how, after going to the library to read the papers, "in the evening we used to go to the pictures. That was how we spent the dole money."

If cinema was the leisure pursuit of the 1920s, then London-born Charlie Chaplin was one of its greatest stars. On 9 September, Chaplin returned home to London for the first time in nine years. The "King of Mirth" had crossed the Atlantic to promote his first feature-length film as director and star, *The Kid*, and he was welcomed like a conquering hero. One young lad presented him with a letter that read: "You were one of us. You are now famous over the world."

Not everyone was in thrall to this cultural invasion, though. By 1927, with anxieties about the Americanisation of British life reaching a crescendo, the Cinematograph Films Act made it mandatory for cinemas to show a quota of British films. Yet that wasn't enough to assuage the fears – voiced regularly in the media – that cinema was too passive, that sensationalised storylines did not depict social reality, and that violent films would lead to rising crime levels.

Britain's self-appointed moral guardians may have fretted over the nation's direction of travel as it advanced into the 1920s. But for those living in poverty, menaced by unemployment, the cinema did something every bit as effective as the bright lights of Soho and fast living of the jazz age: it provided an invaluable form of escapism from the realities of everyday life.

So did Britain really roar in 1921? For some, it certainly did. There's little doubt that people in work – especially those employed in the booming service sector and buoyant light industries – had a greater choice of how to spend their disposable income. Leisure, travel, electrical appliances and even motor vehicles were now more attainable to more people than ever.

But these people were well and truly in the minority. To most Britons in a time of economic turbulence and sprawling slums, the world of haute couture and high society parties would have appeared impossibly remote. To them, the "roaring" twenties was a phenomenon that happened to other people – the preserve of the lucky few. H

Sarah Hellawell is lecturer in modern British history at the University of Sunderland

ONLINE The **1921 Census of England and Wales** will be released on Find My Past on 6 January (*findmypast.co.uk*). The **Scottish census** for that year is due to be made available via the National Records of Scotland in late 2022

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

BBC at 100
PART 1

The BBC begins

A century ago, a group of idealistic radio pioneers launched one of Britain's most famous institutions: the BBC. In the first instalment of our new 13-part series charting how the corporation shaped the nation, **DAVID HENDY** looks back at its earliest days

Broadcast views
The BBC's telephone exchange (top) and studio (bottom, in 1928) in Savoy Hill, the company's London headquarters from 1923. The equipment used was rudimentary, including a large microphone in a box on a wheeled stand

> "For the hardy few who tuned in, the first thing they heard through the hiss and crackle was a news bulletin and a weather forecast"

At six o'clock in the evening on Tuesday 14 November 1922, the BBC took to the airwaves for the first time. Nearly a century later, we might think of this as a defining moment in cultural history but, at the time, it made almost no impact on the world. Newspaper coverage of the launch was virtually non-existent. Only *The Times* mentioned it briefly on one of its inside pages; the fact that inverted commas were placed around the word "broadcasting" was ample proof of just how unknown the term was judged to be.

Nor was the broadcast itself especially exciting. For the hardy few who tuned in, the first thing they heard through the hiss and crackle of the ether was a short news bulletin and a weather forecast. The BBC's announcer read them both twice: first at normal speed, then more slowly so that listeners could take notes. Soon afterwards, the transmitter fell silent for the night.

The BBC – at that point the British Broadcasting Company, not yet a corporation – had been established a month earlier to exploit "wireless" technology that had been around for nearly three decades. Back in 1894, the British physicist Oliver Lodge had been the first to demonstrate radio transmission publicly when he sent a Morse code signal 60 metres and captured it with a specially built receiver. Since then, the young Italian entrepreneur Guglielmo Marconi had laboured to turn Lodge's laboratory device into a lucrative private communication tool, with the potential to make telegraph cables redundant. In the years either side of the First World War, thousands of wireless "amateurs" had tinkered with home-made kits, eavesdropped on messages, and even set up their own small-scale transmitters.

It was partly to provide these enthusiasts with an incentive to buy receivers, and partly to avoid the American experience of "chaos in the ether" with too many stations competing with each other, that Britain's General Post Office granted a broadcasting monopoly to a single national entity: the BBC. As a result, in late 1922, the initiative lay firmly with the tiny handful of men and women on the new company's payroll.

Its dour and formidable general manager, John Reith, did not arrive until December. So, at first, the two people best placed to shape what early broadcasting might become were Arthur Burrows, a former newspaper journalist and Marconi Company manager, and his deputy, Cecil Lewis, a dashing young First World War flying ace. Burrows had been horrified by the use of wireless in spreading misinformation during that conflict. Meanwhile, Lewis had returned from the front determined to add to "the wisdom and beauty of the world" rather than destroy it. Both men wanted to turn what had been an obscure and private medium into a cultural resource from which everyone might benefit.

Hooked on entertainment

It was by no means clear exactly how this would be done. As Reith pointed out, "there were no sealed orders to open". The date of the BBC's opening night had been carefully chosen to be sure everything would be up and running in time to broadcast the results of the following day's general election. Yet Lewis, who was responsible for creating a detailed schedule of programmes for the months to come, believed that news should only ever play the smallest part, having had his fill of "current affairs" during the war. "I didn't really care what was happening in Abyssinia," he later confessed. What he wanted was drama, music, big shows. "We were hooked on the idea of entertainment," he explained.

Resources, though, were scarce. Nor were many performers convinced that the new-fangled medium of radio was worth their effort. As a result, the BBC had a distinctly ad hoc feel about it. When it first took to the

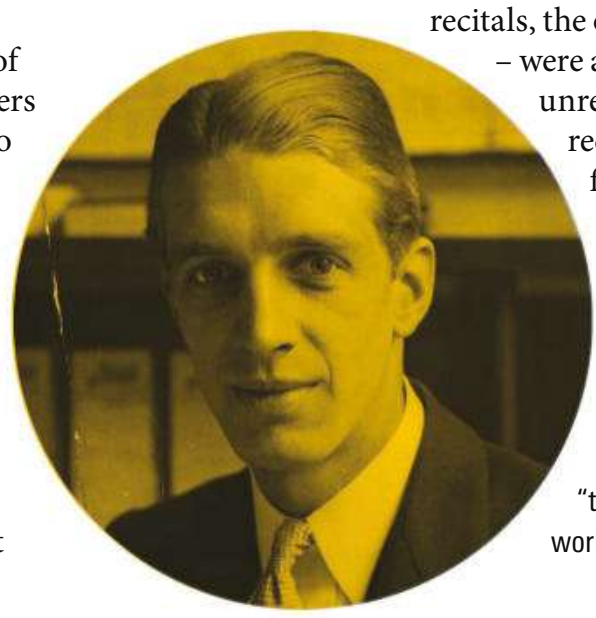
GETTY IMAGES/BBC

Going live BBC staff in Savoy Hill in 1932. "Programmes were always live, frequently unrehearsed, and sometimes required back-room staff to fill in at the microphone," writes David Hendy

airwaves in November, the company was squeezed into a single room in Magnet House, just off London's Kingsway. Every evening, when it was time for the day's broadcasting to begin, Lewis, Burrows and their colleagues would have to dash down to the Aldwych and scurry up to the top floor of Marconi House, where a small box room had been kitted out with a piano and microphone. For now, this was the home of 2LO, the "London" station. Two more stations in Birmingham and Manchester, 5IT and 2ZY, muddled along in similarly cramped conditions.

The wholesale move of the company headquarters and London operation to a larger building just off the Strand the following year allowed broadcasters to spread their wings a little. Savoy Hill offered enough space for a decent-sized general office, separate rooms for senior staff, a modest telephone exchange and several new studios. Even so, conditions were basic. Rats ran through the warren of corridors. The Thames ran nearby, emitting its noxious reek. And the heavy drapes with which the studios were soundproofed created a dusty, overheated airlessness.

Yet for the BBC's rapidly growing staff, Savoy Hill was a thrilling place to work. It was bursting with energy, bustling with ambition, and free – for the moment – of the weight of tradition or routine. Programmes – short skits, book readings, brief musical recitals, the occasional talk or lecture – were always live, frequently unrehearsed, and sometimes required back-room staff to fill in at the microphone. For *Children's Hour*, Arthur Burrows would turn into "Uncle Arthur" and Cecil Lewis would become "Uncle Caractacus".



BBC/SHUTTERSTOCK

Cecil Lewis, one of the BBC's founding executives, c1924. He was determined to add to "the wisdom and beauty of the world" rather than destroy it

Small house orchestras were squeezed into sweltering studios, and BBC engineers would set out with cables and microphones to "relay" opera from Covent Garden or dance bands playing at the Savoy Hotel. The arts of writing for the ear, studio sound effects and running sports commentary all steadily emerged from the chaos.

Idealists and dilettantes

Most programmes were simple affairs, with the occasional attempt at something more spectacular. In 1928, the producer Lance Sieveking attempted to recreate the kind of modernist art he enjoyed in avant-garde novels and expressionist cinema. His programme, *The Kaleidoscope*, was a dazzlingly multi-layered montage of dramatic scenes, music and readings that tied up all seven of Savoy Hill's studios at once – and left most listeners utterly bewildered.

Sieveking saw his job as akin to that of a medieval craftsman set free to carve gargoyles to his heart's content. In a building

stuffed full of men who had fought in the war, military metaphors and titles abounded. Sieveking – like Cecil Lewis, an ex-pilot – referred to the BBC as an "Air Force". Fellow producer Lionel Fielden thought of it as a "port in a storm": a home-from-home for the waifs and strays, idealists and dilettantes who had returned from the battlefield looking for new adventures.

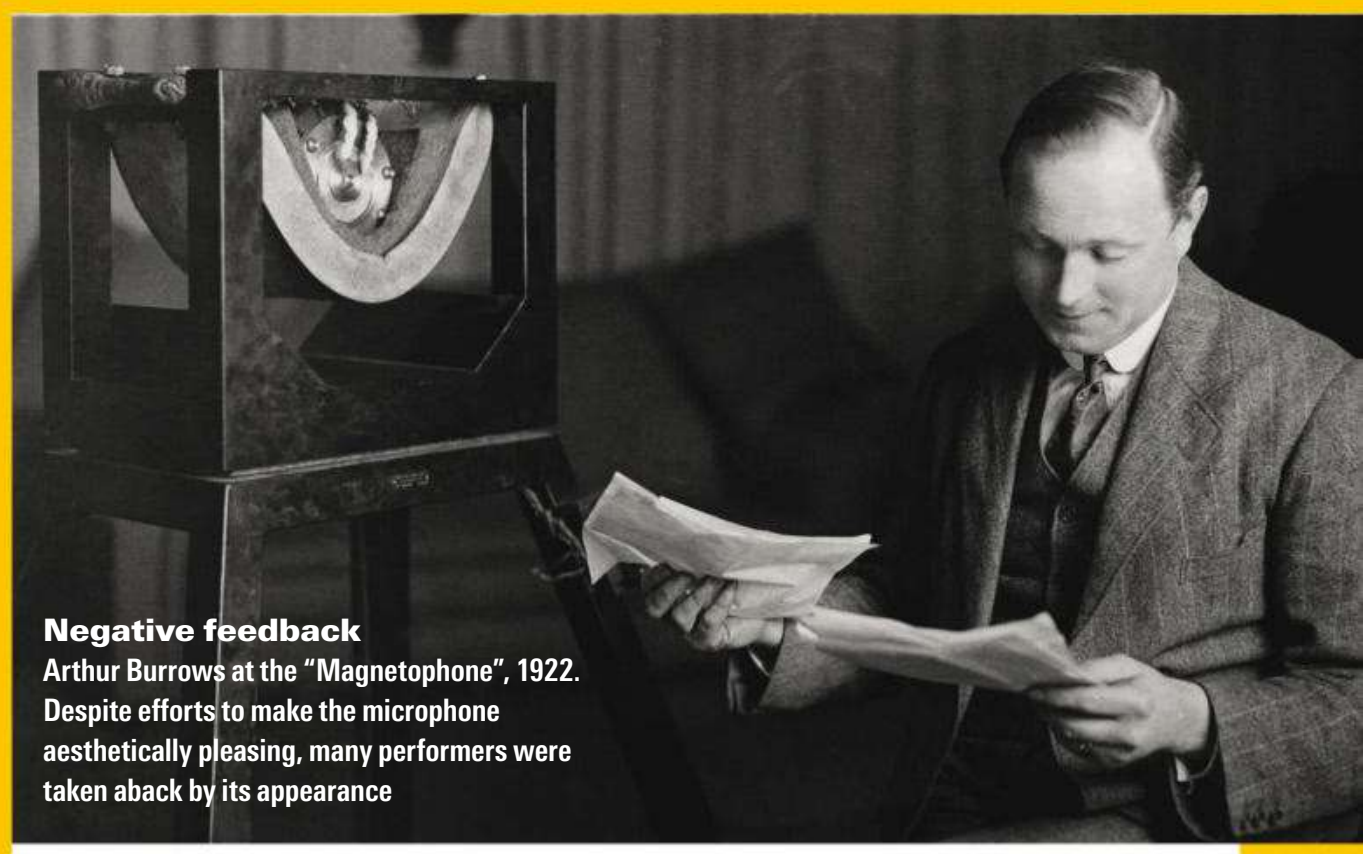
Though the work was unpredictable, it was never directionless and the BBC's first generation of staff found a common mission. Their aim – as John Reith put it, quoting Matthew Arnold's 1869 work, *Culture and Anarchy* – was to make "the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere". Radio would be the means of forging a civilised world from the ashes of conflict. "We may have been silly," Fielden recalled, but "God save us, we really believed that broadcasting could revolutionise human opinion."

Within a few years the BBC would be regarded as a dignified, somewhat starchy, rather cautious national institution. For now, though, Savoy Hill was youthful, volatile and, above all, brimming with hope. H

David Hendy is emeritus professor at the University of Sussex. His new book is *The BBC: A People's History* (Profile, 2022)

LISTEN Greg Jenner is diving into the BBC's archive for the new Radio 4 series **Past Forward**. For more details, turn to our preview on page 88

Performing pioneers
Olive Sturgess (right) and John Huntingdon (rear) duet at Marconi House in 1922. Early broadcasts were made with scant resources and had a "distinctly ad hoc feel"



Negative feedback
Arthur Burrows at the "Magnetophone", 1922. Despite efforts to make the microphone aesthetically pleasing, many performers were taken aback by its appearance

GETTY IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK

IN FOCUS The microphone that struck fear into the hearts of seasoned performers

At the heart of the BBC's operations at Savoy Hill was a simple bit of kit that was vital to broadcasting but utterly terrifying to many who stood before it: the microphone. The earliest models had been no more than telephone receivers dangled from ceiling hooks or propped up on stands. Before long, a more sophisticated device took over: the Magnetophone (pictured above). This consisted of a large, round magnet nestled in a thick sling of spongy rubber to protect it from vibration, mounted in a square wooden frame or "Faraday Cage" to protect it from electromagnetic interference.

The BBC wanted its studios to have a homely feel, and had kitted them out with settees and armchairs, side tables, lamps and plenty of atmospheric lighting. So the Magnetophone's wooden box was also covered in an attractive silk fabric, and the whole contraption was mounted on splayed legs fitted with casters so it could be pushed around the studio like any old piece of domestic furniture.

By this point it looked rather like an old-fashioned meat safe – a device used to keep food fresh before the invention of the fridge – and that's precisely what BBC insiders called it.

Despite this affectionate nickname, guest artistes were invariably taken aback by its presence and bizarre appearance. Accomplished actors who had long ago overcome stage fright found themselves experiencing the horrors of "microphone fright". Many confessed to being temporarily "paralysed" upon seeing it for the first time. It was rumoured that Hollywood star Tallulah Bankhead slid under the table in faints.

Even those who managed to tame their nerves often failed to grasp the principles of the underlying technology. When told that 2 million people around the country would be listening to him, the great Shakespearean actor Henry Ainley decided that, in order to make absolutely sure they heard him properly, he really needed to let rip. He had to be pulled forcibly away by two studio workers before the transmitter was completely blasted to pieces.

> "Through toiling away in the studios, the BBC's first generation of staff found a common mission"

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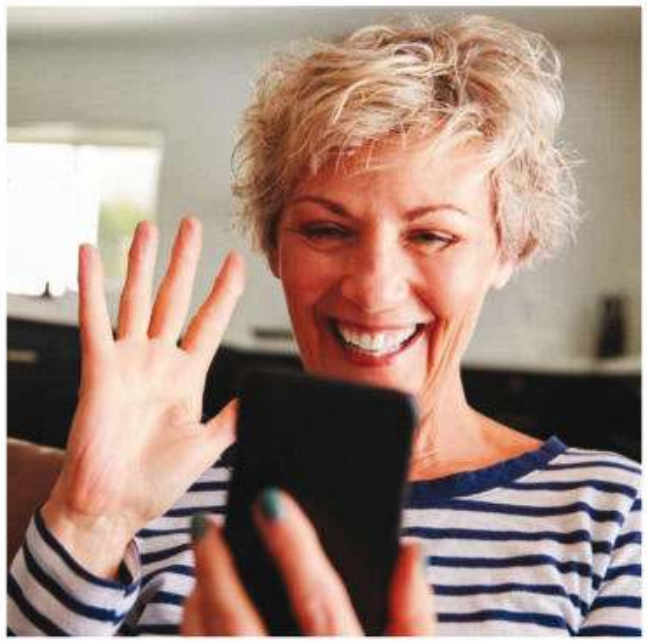

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Enemies of the state

From William Wallace to Lord Haw-Haw, over the past seven centuries the authorities have repeatedly sought to secure treason convictions against people accused of betraying the nation. **Mark Cornwall** examines what 10 high-profile treason cases can tell us about the evolving relationship between individual rights and the power of the state

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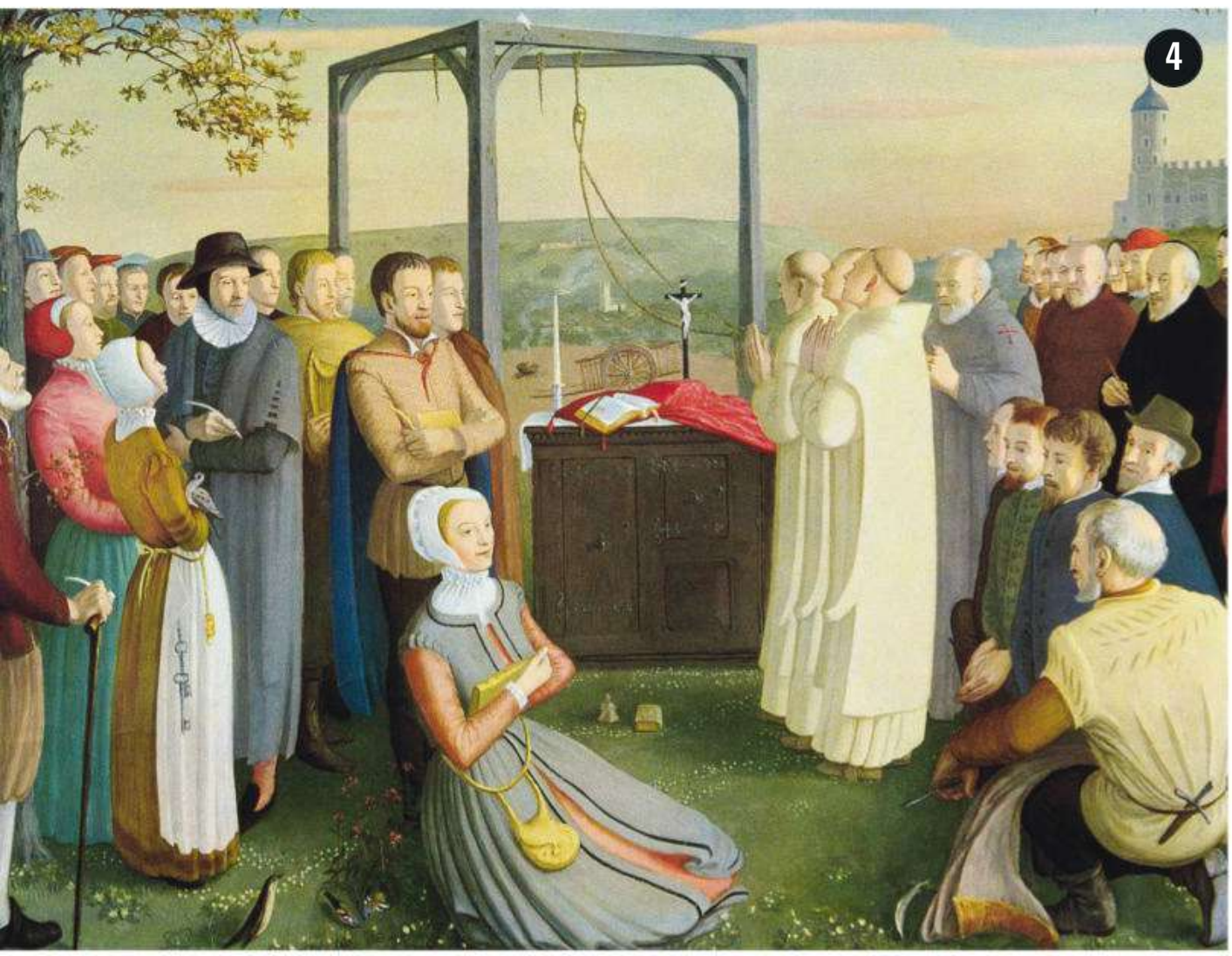
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TRYING TIMES

1 Crowds gather outside Wandsworth Prison after the execution of Nazi propagandist William Joyce in 1946

2 The gunpowder plot conspirators shown in a contemporary engraving. Guy Fawkes is second from right

3 A 19th-century painting showing the trial of William Wallace, 1305

4 The 40 "Catholic martyrs" of England and Wales, 1535–1679 (when Roman Catholicism was widely equated with treason), shown in a 20th-century painting

5 Thomas More is beheaded on Tower Hill for using "malicious words" against Henry VIII

6 Roger Casement, the Irish nationalist executed in 1916 for helping Germany, shown in Peru, where he unmasked human rights abuses

7 A contemporary woodcut shows Charles I losing his head at Whitehall in 1649

6

7

1 William Wallace's watershed case

The Scot's trial proved there was little to prevent kings from using treason laws to pursue vendettas

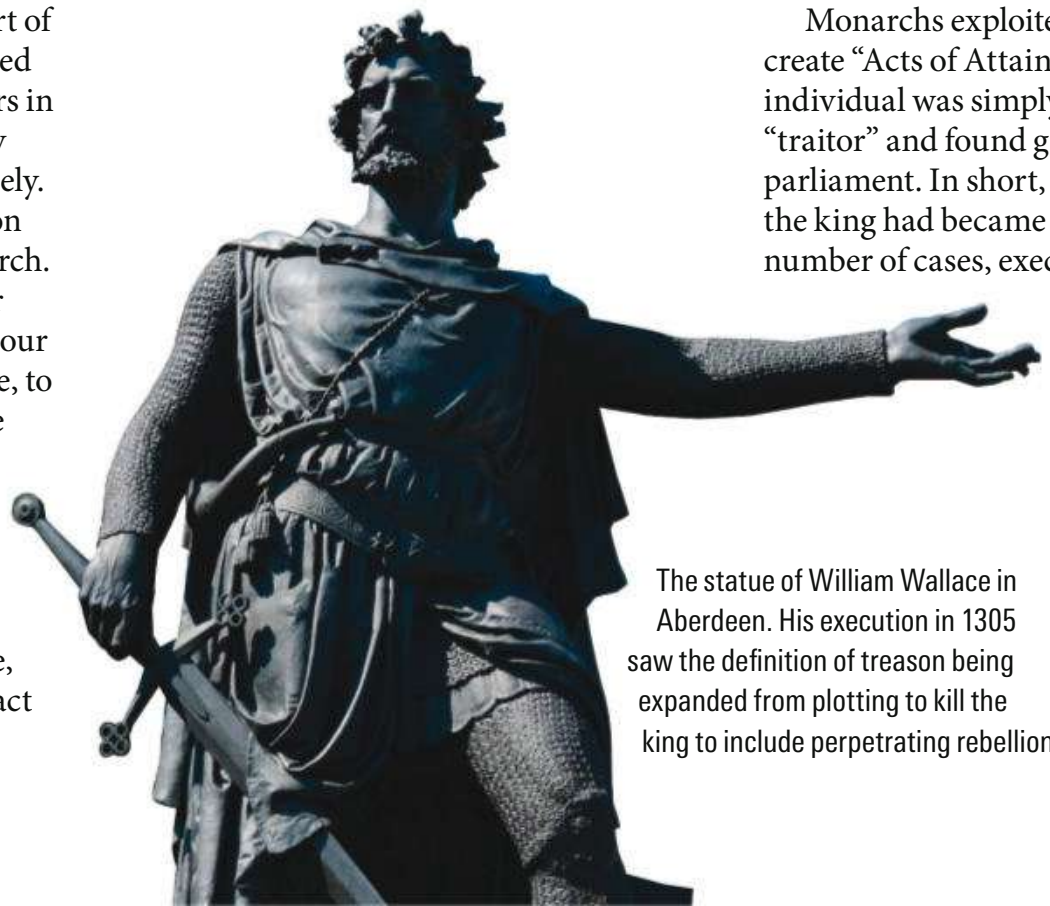
On 23 August 1305, William Wallace was convicted of treason at Westminster Hall in London. He then suffered the gruesome fate of the male traitor: hanging, drawing and quartering. King Edward I was determined to revenge himself brutally on this tiresome figurehead of Scottish independence – who had famously defeated English forces at Stirling Bridge in 1297 – and the Wallace case proved to be a watershed. It signified an extension by Edward I of the crime of treason, which now meant not just plotting the death of the king, but also the act of "levying war" (rebellion). In this way, England's monarchs by the 14th century were defining "treason" arbitrarily to suit their own purposes.

In the 1350s the English barons finally acted to curb such royal behaviour. As part of a number of political concessions, they used Edward III's request for money for his wars in France to leverage a special parliamentary law that would define treason more precisely. According to the 1351 Treason Act, treason above all meant a crime against the monarch. It occurred "when a man doth compass or imagine the death of our lord the king, of our lady his queen, or of their eldest son". Here, to plot treason (compass or imagine) was the same as to carry out the deed. But it was also treason to "levy war against our lord the king in his realm", or to aid the king's enemies, "giving to them aid and comfort in the realm or elsewhere".

This might sound like precise language, guaranteed to restrain royal tyranny. In fact it proved to be remarkably vague. And an extra clause in the 1351 act offered unscrupulous monarchs still further latitude. It stipulated that, if judges could not decide what was "treason", they had to refer the case to king and parliament.

Monarchs exploited this new clause to create "Acts of Attainder", by which an individual was simply declared to be a "traitor" and found guilty of treason by act of parliament. In short, with parliament's help, the king had became judge, jury and, in a number of cases, executioner.

Horrible end Hugh Despenser is hanged, drawn and quartered – on the orders of Queen Isabella and her ally Roger Mortimer – in Hereford, 1326. By the 14th century, those convicted of treason could expect to meet with a gruesome death



The statue of William Wallace in Aberdeen. His execution in 1305 saw the definition of treason being expanded from plotting to kill the king to include perpetrating rebellion

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2 The talk of the Tower

Words, not deeds, sent Thomas More to the block in 1535

Tudor England saw a sharp rise in cases of treason. The Tudor monarchs introduced 68 new treason laws in order to bolster the dynastic succession, but also to uphold the religious break with Rome. This process began in the 1530s with Henry VIII keen to strengthen his position after marrying Anne Boleyn. Henry saw the 1351 Treason Act as inadequate for punishing new types of traitor. In 1533, a nun named Elizabeth Barton prophesied that the king would die if he married Anne. Henry wanted Barton tried for treason, but his judges disagreed and finally an Act of Attainder was passed to convict and execute her.

However, it was Sir Thomas More (pictured below on the day of his execution) who most famously fell foul of the Treasons Act of 1534, which pronounced it "treason" to abuse the king by calling him a heretic or tyrant through use of "malicious words". More was a fierce opponent of the Reformation and, as lord chancellor, refused to take an oath acknowledging Henry as supreme head of the English church over the pope. It was a stance that would land More in the Tower of London.

It was while in the Tower that More received a visit from Richard Rich, the solicitor-general. Rich tried to trick the prisoner into confessing his treason, later claiming that More had denied Henry's supremacy. Significantly, Rich and More were the only two present at the exchange.

When More appeared in court in 1535, he refuted the idea that he had spoken "maliciously", asserting that Rich was lying and adding: "I am more concerned for your perjury than my own danger."

This did not save More. The jury took just 15 minutes to find him guilty of "treason by words" and he was beheaded. The case showed the dangerous potential of the 1534 Treasons Act. It was repealed after Henry's death and, from then on, any charge of treason required two witnesses as proof.

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Men of faith
Edmund Campion shown (right) with fellow Jesuit priest Robert Parsons. The authorities secured Campion's conviction by portraying him as a common traitor

3 The making of a martyr

In 1581, the Jesuit priest Edmund Campion denied that Catholicism equalled treason. The authorities disagreed

To some in the era of Elizabeth I, the Jesuit priest Edmund Campion was an evil Catholic "traitor". To others, he was an inspirational martyr. It was under Elizabeth that Roman Catholics were increasingly seen as traitors within the state, for in 1570 the pope had excommunicated the queen as a Protestant heretic. This showed English Catholics that they no longer owed the queen any allegiance. It also spurred on Elizabeth's government to create a raft of new treason laws to shore up her security.

By the 1580s, treason law was veering in a sharply anti-Catholic direction due to an influx of Jesuit priests into the country. With the blessing of the pope, their mission was to lead England back to the Catholic faith.

In June 1580, Edmund Campion, disguised as an Irish jeweller, slipped secretly into England from France. For a year he said masses in Catholic houses around the country, but the authorities were in hot pursuit and finally he was arrested, discovered hiding in a priest-hole in Berkshire. Escorted to the Tower, he was tortured on the rack to try to secure a confession of treason.

For those preparing Campion's trial in Westminster Hall in 1581, it was vital to display him as a common traitor, not a religious martyr. They therefore based their charges on the 1351 Treason Act, claiming that his real goal was to destroy Elizabeth and stir up rebellion.

Campion, like Thomas More, put up a strong defence. His mission, he said, was purely pastoral and could not be interpreted as political or treasonous. Once on the scaffold he again adamantly denied that Catholicism equalled treason, but it was exactly that conclusion that Elizabeth's regime was reaching. The public debate over whether Campion was a traitor or a martyr was long-lasting: in 1970 he was canonised by Pope Paul VI.

Treason law veered in a sharply anti-Catholic direction due to an influx of Jesuit priests into the country

4 Guy Fawkes' "greatest treason"

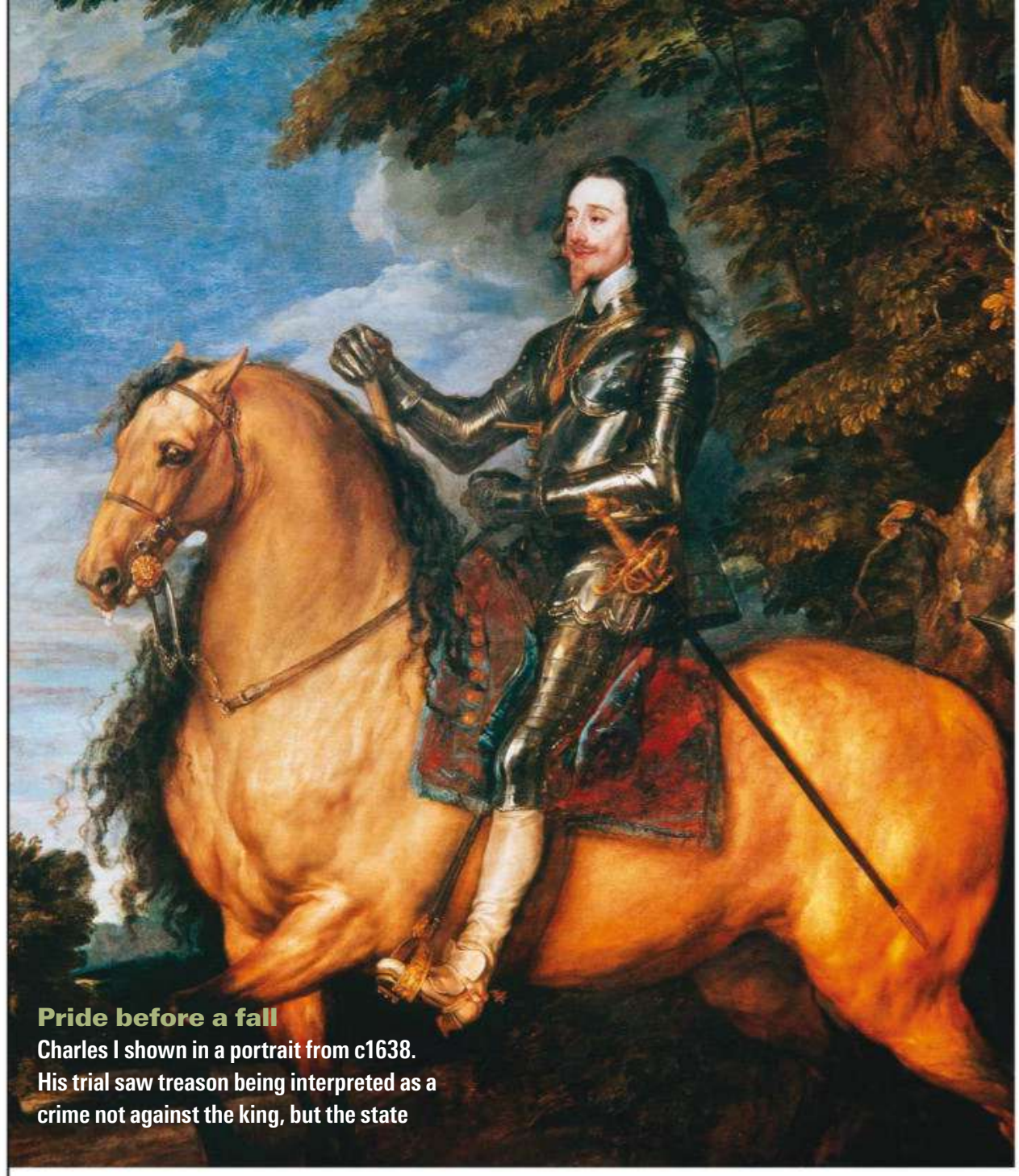
The gunpowder plot was cast as the ultimate act of Catholic treachery

The gunpowder plot was the most notorious treason in British history. The public reputation of Guy Fawkes would endure for centuries but, unlike Campion, that reputation was wholly negative, perpetuated annually in popular culture on bonfire night.

This demonisation was fully on display at Fawkes's trial in January 1606. There was no doubt about his guilt: he had been arrested in the cellars underneath parliament, next to the barrels of gunpowder intended to blow up both king and parliament. Leading the prosecution case, Sir Edward Coke (pictured) gave a speech full of hyperbole, exclaiming that "these are the greatest treasons that ever were plotted in England". Coke portrayed treason like a tree: the "powder treason" had deep roots and had arisen "out of the dead ashes of former treasons" – in other words, out of Catholic treachery in the reign of Elizabeth.

While Fawkes's guilt was clear, the authorities were less sure about his motivation. Historians agree that the plotters especially wanted revenge against an anti-Catholic regime. From 1603 they had expected toleration from the new Stuart king, James VI & I, and felt betrayed when this did not occur.

Fawkes, who had served as a Catholic mercenary abroad, felt that the violence of the regime should now be answered with violence. And he had an extra motive: his English patriotism and hatred of the "Scottish invasion". The Scottish king James had united the crowns of Scotland and England and, as Fawkes told his Scottish interrogators, "his intent was to have blown them back into Scotland". Fawkes's fiery voice emerges from his interrogation. But it is Edward Coke's version of events that has endured in English popular culture.



Pride before a fall
Charles I shown in a portrait from c1638. His trial saw treason being interpreted as a crime not against the king, but the state

5 A king at war with his people

To secure the conviction of Charles I, his accusers had to turn to the ancient traditions of Roman law

The mid-17th century was a violent age across Britain and Ireland, illustrated by the execution of King Charles I for treason. But how was this possible, when treason in law had always been a crime *against* the monarch?

The trial in January 1649 was the culmination of a decade of conflict between Charles and his parliament, with 200,000 people dying in England and Wales in the civil war. Parliament in the 1640s had also radically reinterpreted treason law, making it more of a crime against the state, in order to execute some of Charles's key advisers. To prosecute the king himself, they accused him of "levying war" against his own people. The legal basis for this could not be the 1351 Treason Act. Instead, the court charged him under the ancient traditions of Roman law – which held that a ruler who was a "tyrant" could face justice.

Charles's trial was a "show-trial", for the victorious army leaders were determined to execute him for treason. They created a special High Court of Justice in Westminster Hall and carefully vetted the MPs who could attend. But they still wanted a show of legality for the public, so a formal procedure was followed and the king was instructed to plead. Yet Charles denied the army their propaganda coup by refusing to recognise the court. It meant that, although he was found guilty as a "public enemy to the Commonwealth of England", he had rejected the way that treason was being interpreted.

More than a decade after his execution, following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the regicides themselves would be put on trial for treason. They were charged and executed under the 1351 Treason Act, as proof that the previous era had been one of gross illegality.

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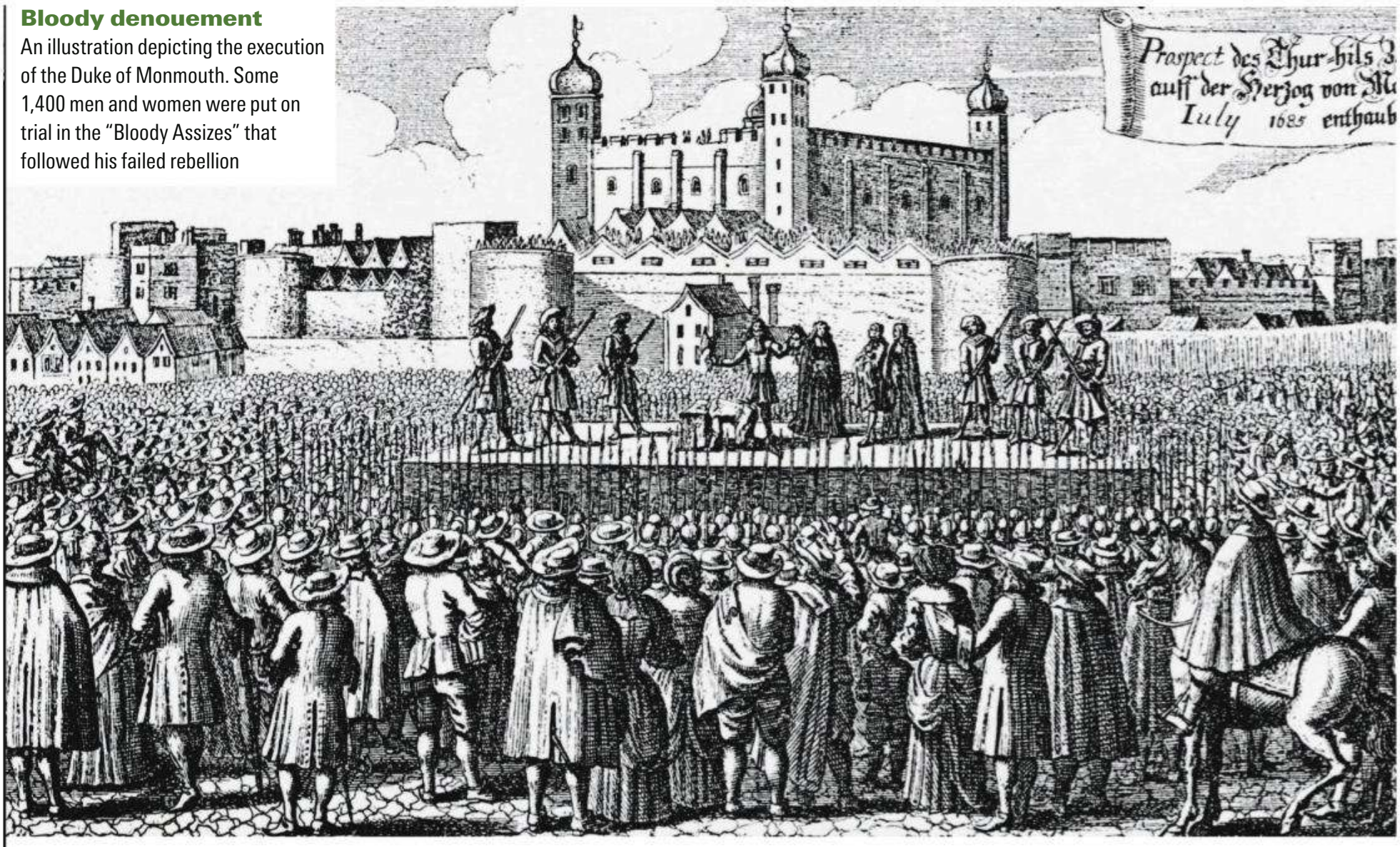

Bloody denouement
An illustration depicting the execution of the Duke of Monmouth. Some 1,400 men and women were put on trial in the "Bloody Assizes" that followed his failed rebellion

6 Rough justice for a regicide's wife

The fate of Alice Lisle in 1685 shone a harsh light on biased, bullying judges

In 1649, John Lisle had been one of the judges at Charles I's trial. Thirty-six years later, the tables had turned and Lisle's own wife, Alice, stood accused of the crime of treason. She would endure the same fate as the king.

Alice Lisle's downfall was brought about by the disastrous Monmouth rebellion. The accession to the throne of the openly Catholic king James II had triggered an uprising led by James's nephew the Duke of Monmouth. The duke invaded England at the head of an army but was soundly defeated in July 1685 at the battle of Sedgemoor in Somerset.

While Monmouth was executed as a "traitor" through an Act of Attainder, some 1,400 rebels were put on trial in the so-called "Bloody Assizes". These were adjudicated by the sadistic lord chief justice, George Jeffreys, who already had earned himself a fearsome reputation for bullying witnesses to secure a guilty verdict.

Among his new victims was the 70-year-old Alice Lisle, unusual both by gender and age for being charged with treason. She was accused of harbouring two rebel traitors in her house in Hampshire – behaviour that Jeffreys claimed was just as bad a treason. At the trial, held in Winchester in August 1685, Jeffreys harangued the witnesses, threatening them with hell-fire. When Alice Lisle pleaded that she "abhorred the principles and practices of the late rebellion", he repeatedly interrupted her with "evidence" of her guilt and hinted at the past anti-monarchical behaviour of her own husband.

The jury found Alice Lisle guilty, after the judge threatened to prosecute them for treason, too

The execution of Alice Lisle (pictured) helped bring about a change in the treason law. By 1696, those on trial were finally allowed a defence lawyer

Despite this open bias, the jury found Lisle not-guilty three times: only on the fourth attempt did they convict, after a furious Jeffreys threatened to prosecute them for treason, too. Lisle was then beheaded in Winchester marketplace.

To the last, Lisle denied knowing that her visitors were rebels. Whether or not this was true, her conviction would be overturned by parliament after the fall of James II in 1688. Her case also aided those pushing for the reform of procedure in treason trials. Through the Treason Trials Act of 1696, those on trial were finally allowed a defence lawyer, and the judge's role was also curbed to stop the type of bullying witnessed under George Jeffreys.

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

7 Revolutionary jitters

In 1794, the government – spooked by turmoil in France – embarked on an ill-fated attempt to prosecute a political radical

The 1700s saw relatively few treason trials in Britain. Yet all that changed in dramatic style at the end of the century – thanks to events on the other side of the English Channel. The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 made the British government increasingly anxious that revolutionary ideas would take hold. When, in 1793, French king Louis XVI was executed for treason and Britain found itself embroiled in war with France, those fears went into overdrive – as a shoemaker named Thomas Hardy (pictured above right) would discover to his cost.

Hardy's trial in 1794 served as a test case of Britain's archaic 1351 Treason Act. Hardy was the founder of the London Corresponding Society, which campaigned for radical political reform. When he planned a public assembly to demand reform of the House of Commons, he was arrested as a revolutionary and charged with treason.

At Hardy's trial at the Old Bailey, the prosecution accused him of plotting to kill the king because he was challenging parliament: in other words, an attack on one was taken as an attack on the other. Hardy, however, was defended by Thomas Erskine, one of the most skilful defence lawyers of the era, and his tactics reveal well the impact of the 1696 trial reforms on court proceedings. Erskine ridiculed the idea that demanding political reform was equivalent to "imagining the death" of King George III.

The jury agreed, and Hardy was acquitted on 5 November (Guy Fawkes Day). His supporters triumphantly carried him around London and struck a medal in his honour.

After this failure to exploit the 1351 Act, William Pitt's government in 1795 passed the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act to modernise the definition of treason. It was now treason "to intimidate both Houses of Parliament" – plotting to overthrow the state, not just the king. The 1795 law was used repeatedly over the next few decades, notably in 1820 after the "Cato Street Conspiracy": an ambitious plot by radicals to murder the entire British cabinet.

The defence ridiculed the idea that calling for political reform was equivalent to "imagining the death" of George III

French terror
In this satirical print by James Gillray, dating to 1795, sans-culottes attack the state coach carrying George III and driven by William Pitt. The French Revolution weighed heavily on many Britons' minds

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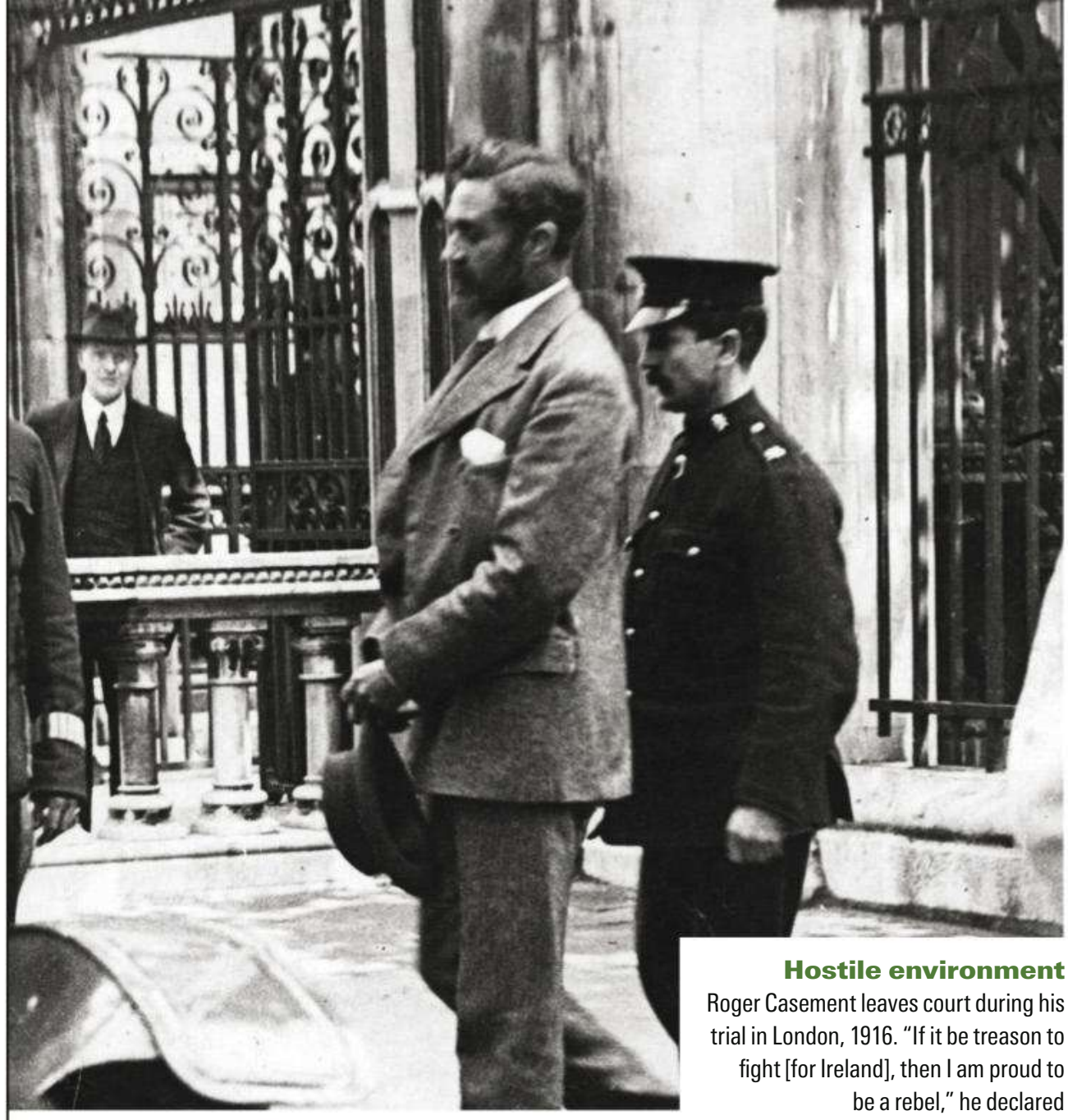

Hostile environment
Roger Casement leaves court during his trial in London, 1916. "If it be treason to fight [for Ireland], then I am proud to be a rebel," he declared

8 Dying for Ireland

The trial of Roger Casement, hanged in 1916 for seeking German aid, raised the issue of citizens with divided loyalties

Thomas Hardy may have defied the government in the law courts. But the Irish nationalist Roger Casement – who was charged with treason 120 years later at the height of the First World War – wasn't so lucky.

Casement's trial again showed the difficulties of defining "treason" and of securing a fair trial. Before 1914, Casement had a huge moral reputation because he had exposed human rights abuses in the Congo and Peru. With the outbreak of war, however, he travelled to Germany to secure help for what he saw as the moral cause of Irish independence.

While admitting that he was a traitor to Britain, Casement wrote that "my country [Ireland, which was at that point ruled from London] can only gain from my treason". He would, he believed, be betraying Ireland if he did not perform "a bold deed of open treason". Yet German aid was lukewarm and in April 1916 Casement returned to Ireland, where he was captured and sent to the Tower of London to await trial.

Casement's crime seemed clear under the 1351 Act: he had given "aid and comfort" to the king's enemies, behaviour that was even worse during a major war. Yet like so many "traitors", he disputed the whole trial and took the moral high-ground. His allegiance, he said, was to Ireland: "If it be treason to fight [for Ireland], then I am proud to be a rebel, and shall cling to my 'rebellion' with the last drop of my blood." He also objected to being tried in London, by a purely English jury, with a prosecution led by the attorney-general, FE Smith, who was notoriously hostile to Irish nationalism. The courtroom was stacked against him.

Even worse, on discovering that Casement was homosexual, the authorities tried to discredit his moral stature. They leaked to the newspapers his "Black Diaries", which graphically detailed his sex life.

As with Edmund Campion, Casement's trial revealed the split-allegiance at the root of so many treason cases. When he was hanged he, too, became a martyr – this time to the Irish nationalist cause.

9 Haw-Haw's fatal lies

A passport proved crucial in sending Nazi propagandist William Joyce to the gallows

Everyone had heard of "Lord Haw-Haw" (William Joyce) during the Second World War. Joyce's daily radio broadcasts from Nazi Germany had made him one of the most reviled men in Britain – a sentiment that was hardly improved by Hitler's decision to decorate him for his work.

After his capture in 1945, the authorities were keen to set an example of Joyce, trying him, like Roger Casement, under the 1351 Treason Act for "aiding the enemy". The jury found Joyce guilty in 20 minutes, and he was hanged in Wandsworth Prison in January 1946. He was the last person to be executed for treason in Britain.

Yet this easy conviction was problematic, even a miscarriage of justice. Although Joyce had committed the crime, it was discovered during his trial that he was not a British citizen and therefore not subject to British law. He had been born in New York and, though residing in Britain for 17 years, had never taken citizenship.

The charge of treason therefore seemed weak, but the prosecutor, Hartley Shawcross, found another way to convict. When in England, Joyce had openly stressed his British allegiance, and had three times lied in order to secure a British passport. With this he had fled to Germany in August 1939 and retained it for a year before taking German citizenship. Because of this passport, Shawcross claimed that in 1939–40 Joyce (pictured below after his capture) had owed allegiance to the king in return for being under "British protection". Instead, he had betrayed the crown.

Joyce claimed that he had tried to lead Britain towards friendship with Germany: "I know that I have been denounced as a traitor and I resent the accusation, as I conceive myself to have been guilty of no underhand or deceitful act against Britain."

In fact, his conflicted loyalties entrapped him: in the end he was hanged for having a British passport.

Communist threat
The foreign secretary Harold Macmillan compared "Cambridge Spies" Donald Maclean (pictured above) and Guy Burgess (left) to Catholic agents of the Elizabethan era

10 The era of the traitor-spy

The Cold War saw the emergence of a new security threat, headed by Britons working for the Soviet Union

The essence of treason has remained static through the centuries, as a crime that seriously endangers state security, often in collusion with a foreign enemy. However, the threats to British security have constantly shifted. Since the Second World War, treason has usually meant the betrayal of state secrets.

In 1955, foreign secretary Harold Macmillan spoke in the House of Commons about the case of the "Cambridge Spies", Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, who had just been exposed as traitors working for the Soviet Union. Macmillan explained that the landscape in Britain now resembled the era of Elizabeth I, with "traitor-spies" busy everywhere. Citizens were being attracted to communism, just as once they were drawn to Catholicism. But, he warned, the state now had to be careful to balance civil rights against the interests of state security.

In our own age, the use of the archaic 1351 Treason Act has been abandoned although it remains on the statute book. Instead, as in the past, the British state has created a range of new laws for new dangers. When traitor-spies were prosecuted from the 1950s, they were usually charged under the Official Secrets Act, but more recently the government has employed terrorism laws against violent crimes once designated as "treason".

Yet with the evolution of security dangers, it's been argued that new measures are required. In 2018, the think-tank Policy Exchange suggested that the 1351 Act should be reformed or replaced, in order to easily condemn as traitors those British citizens who fled abroad to help Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq. So far, this idea of a new treason law has remained just that: an idea.

The history of treason in Britain has repeatedly revealed not only the difficulty of defining a crime that's so inextricably linked with state power, but also the challenges of ensuring the accused are given a fair trial. With these two issues in mind, the jury is still out on whether we need a new law for British traitors in the 21st century. H

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Mark Cornwall is professor of modern European history at the University of Southampton. He is writing a history of treason in the late Habsburg empire, 1848–1918

LISTEN Clive Anderson investigated the Lord Haw-Haw trial in an episode of BBC Radio 4's **Every Case Tells a Story**. You can find that at *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b05wxx6x*

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BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

Kim Gordon (front) in Beijing in the mid-1960s, before his family was detained by the authorities. He spent four years of his childhood in China during the tumultuous era of the Cultural Revolution

ERIC GORDON

In 1965, **Kim Gordon** and his parents moved from Britain to China to see communism for themselves.

At first, it was a time of excitement and adventure. But as the increasingly radical government grew more hostile to foreigners, everything changed.

Arrested as they were leaving the country, the family was detained without trial and taken to a hotel room that would be Kim's entire world for two years...

By Monica Whitlock

When Apollo 11 touched down on the moon in July 1969, Kim Gordon was one of the few British schoolboys who knew nothing about it. Aged 13, he was mad about cars, planes and engines. But he was also shut away from the world, living in captivity in Beijing.

For two long years, Room 421 of the Xin Qiao hotel was both home and prison for Kim and his parents, Eric and Marie. They had no access to a radio or telephone, newspapers or letters from home. Their relatives back in England had no idea where they were, nor even whether they were alive. Their room measured just four square metres – enough for a desk, a chair and three little beds, crammed close together. During those two years the family had no one to talk to but their interrogators, and no diversions except for a couple of books and some sheets of hotel writing paper.

Fifty years later, as we sat in his Brighton flat, Kim showed me the creations he had improvised in those endless, empty days: tiny, intricate paper buses complete with upper decks; handwritten plays and diaries; and letters to friends back at primary school in East Finchley, north London – letters that would never be posted.

Kim's long adventure in China had begun in 1965. His parents were communists who, disenchanted by the Soviet variant of the ideology they encountered on family holidays to eastern Europe, had become excited by its younger version in China. There, Mao Zedong's revolution was just 16 years old, and the Gordons wanted to see it first hand. Eric got a job as a copy editor at the Foreign Languages Press, and the family left their basement flat in London for a new life in Beijing, then known as Peking. Kim recalls a thrilling midwinter journey from Europe across Asia, pausing in ice-bound Irkutsk in Siberia. "The whole thing was a total adventure into this strange universe," he says.

In Beijing, the family moved into a vast hostel complex built to house thousands of Soviet advisors. In 1961, Mao's China had parted ways with Khrushchev's Soviet Union on ideological grounds. Those Soviet advisors and their families were recalled, and the hostel complex was left empty except for a few dozen sympathetic foreigners, joined in 1965 by the Gordons.

"To us kids, it's like a kingdom!" nine-year-old Kim wrote. "You can imagine what mischief we can get up to." He and the other children chased each other around the deserted building, discovering doors that led to a network of underground tunnels dug to enable evacuation in the event of nuclear war. This warren of subterranean passages, extending far beneath the city, was designed to allow hundreds of thousands of people to escape. "We used to play hide and seek in them," Kim remembers. "The other thing we really enjoyed playing was 'Kill the Americans', because, of course, this was the time of the Vietnam War – so the Americans were the enemy. So we played 'goodies and baddies', and the 'baddies' were the American imperialists."

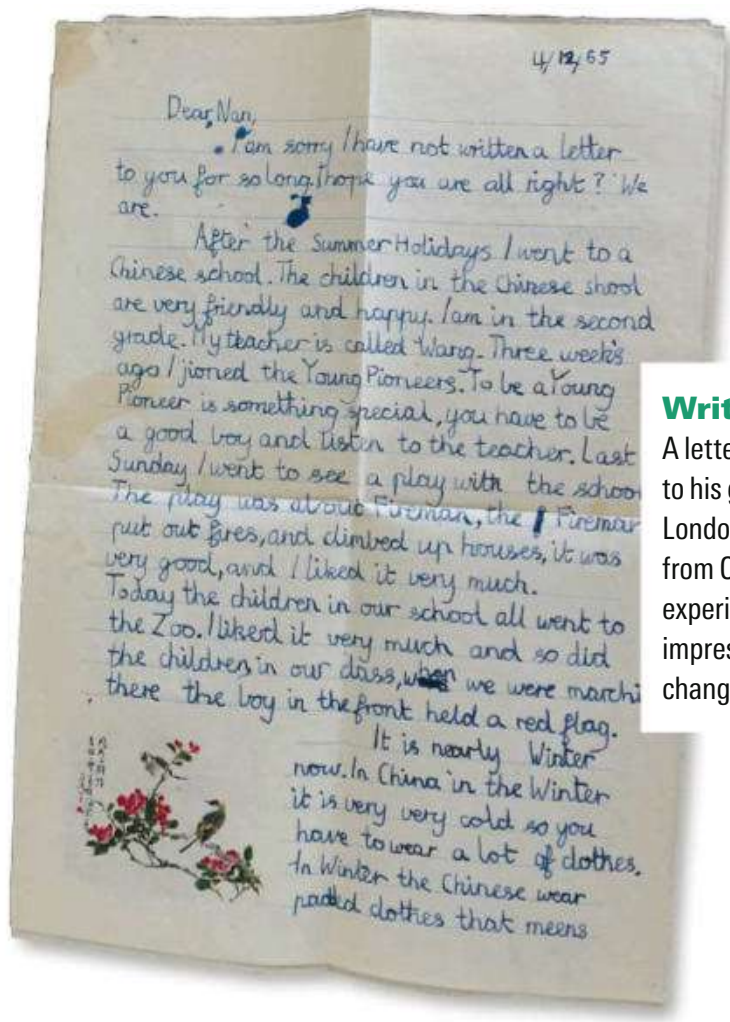
"The other thing we really enjoyed playing was 'Kill the Americans', because, of course, this was the time of the Vietnam War"

In the 1960s, China was one of the poorest countries on Earth. Where the megalopolis of Beijing now towers, Kim remembers fields of maize. Camels plodded in from the Gobi Desert, and donkey carts filled the dirt lanes; sewerage, clean water and decent roads were a world away. Kim attended the local Chinese school; it was strict and dull, but he quickly began to learn Chinese. He also joined the Young Pioneers, the Communist children's organisation, along with his classmates.

In a letter Kim wrote to his grandmother in December 1965, his sharp sense of detail is already apparent:

"It is nearly winter now. In China in the winter is very very cold so you have to wear a lot of clothes. In winter the Chinese wear padded clothes that means that the clothes are stuffed with cotton wool. At the moment I wear padded shoes, hat, gloves when it gets very cold I will start wearing a padded jacket."

Kim's many letters to his grandmother and his schoolfriend Peter document in detail his enthralling new life. He wrote about the brown-and-white kitten ("with fur about an inch long") given to him by a Chinese boy, his stamp collection, and the propaganda dramas and slogans



4/12/65

Dear Nan,

I am sorry I have not written a letter to you for so long. I hope you are all right? We are.

After the Summer Holidays I went to a Chinese school. The children in the Chinese shool are very friendly and happy. I am in the second grade. My teacher is called Wang. Three weeks ago I joined the Young Pioneers. To be a Young Pioneer is something special, you have to be a good boy and listen to the teacher. Last Sunday I went to see a play with the schoo The play was about Fireman, the Fireman put out fires, and climbed up houses, it was very good, and I liked it very much.

Today the children in our school all went to the Zoo. I liked it very much and so did the children in our class, when we were marchi there the boy in the front held a red flag.

It is nearly Winter now. In China in the Winter it is very very cold so you have to wear a lot of clothes. In Winter the Chinese wear padded clothes that means

ERIC GORDON

Writing home
A letter Kim Gordon wrote to his grandmother in London in 1965. His letters from China detailed his experiences and youthful impressions of the nation's changing politics

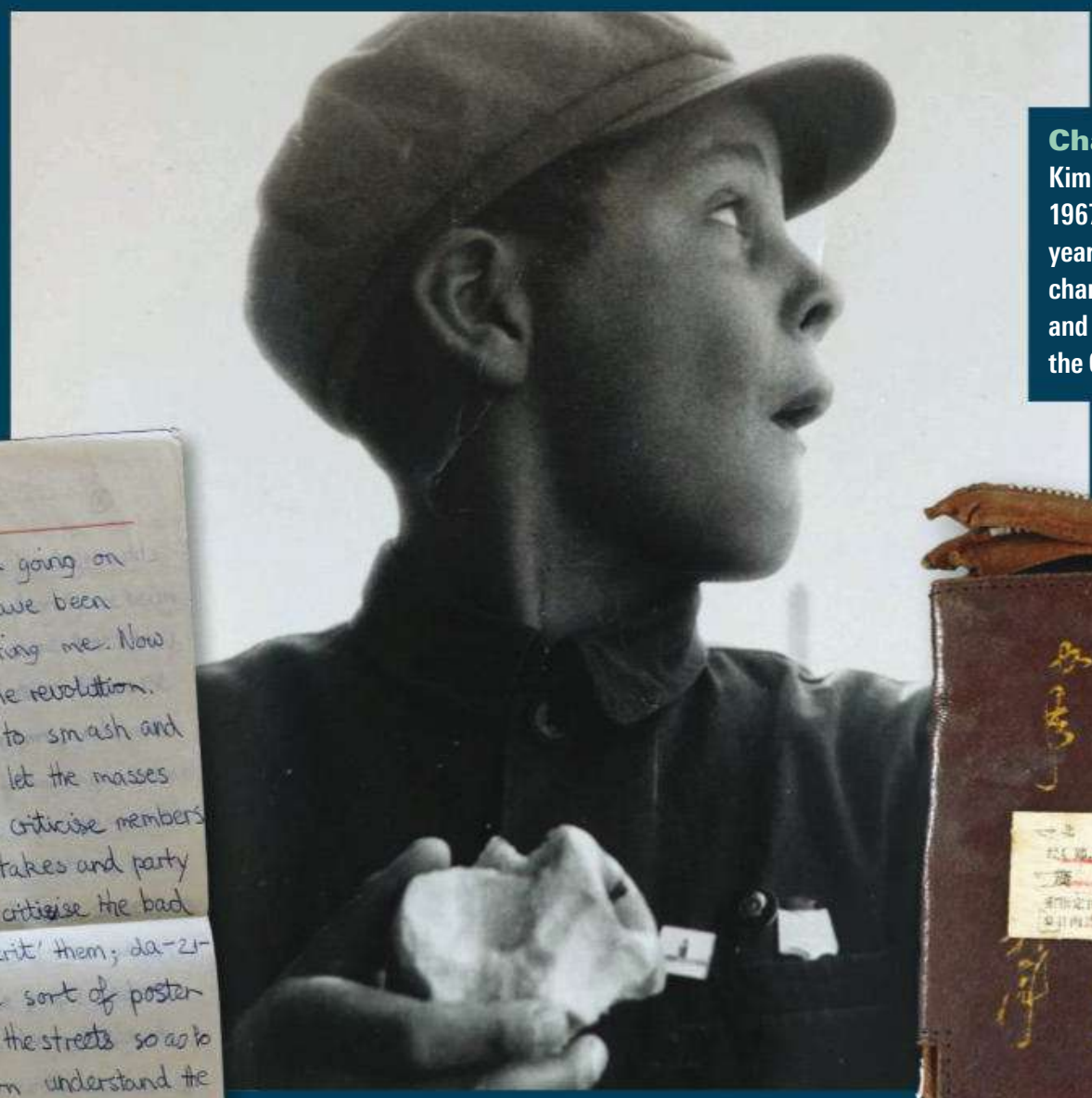
Living off the land
Workers harvest rice in Canton, 1956. In 1965, when Kim and his family relocated to China to start a new life, it was among the world's poorest countries

Youth club
A propaganda poster bearing the slogan "We Are Chairman Mao's Little Red Guards". Kim was among the millions of young people who joined the militant student movement mobilised by Mao (pictured above, depicted on a French badge) in 1966

Half a world away
Kim Gordon in 1966, at the Beijing hostel complex the family called home in the years before they were imprisoned. "In winter the Chinese wear padded clothes stuffed with cotton wool... I wear padded shoes, hat, gloves," he wrote

ERIC GORDON/BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Political essay
Kim's essay on the Cultural Revolution, written during his time in the Xin Qiao hotel. He now describes his youthful idealism about the regime as "ridiculously childish and simplistic"



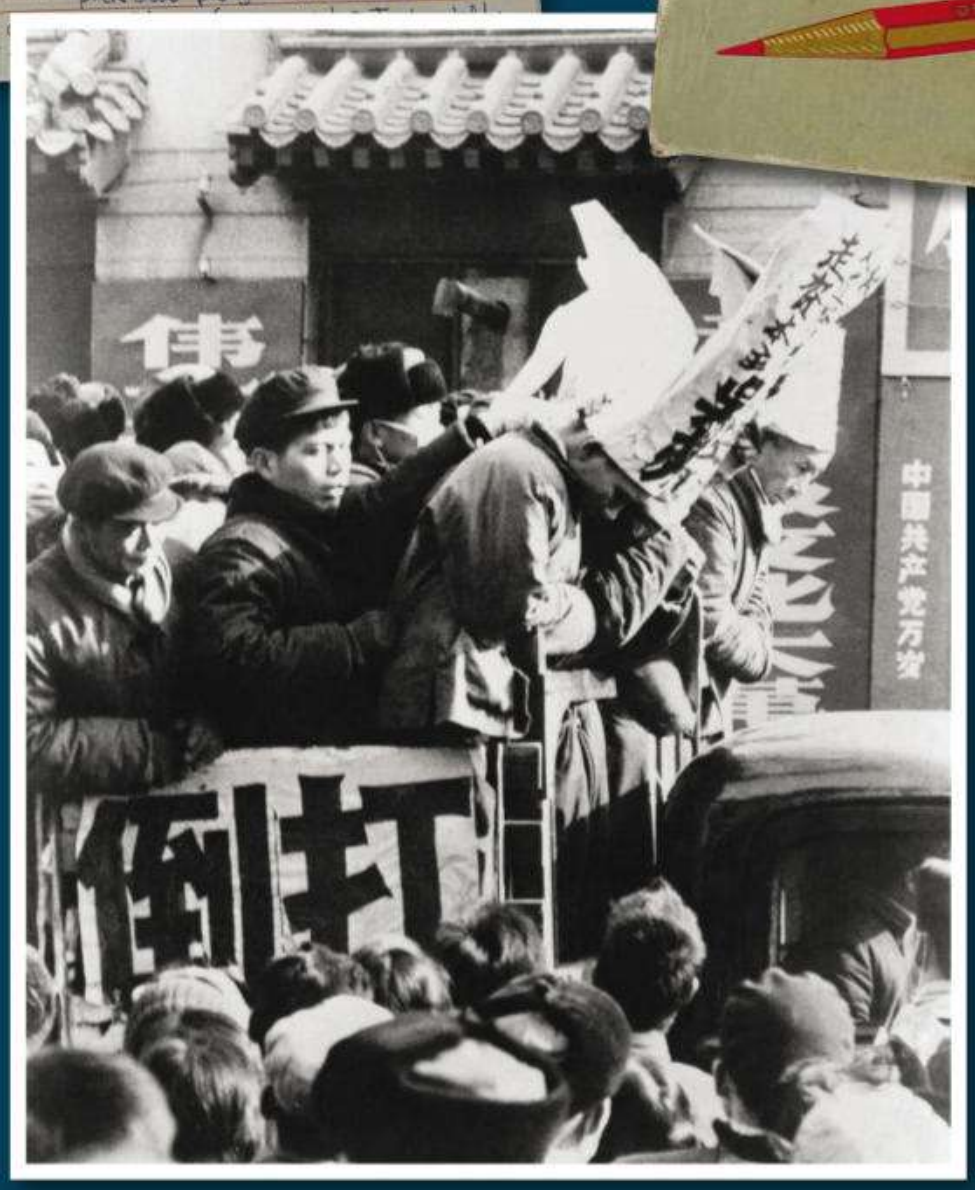
Changing times
Kim pictured in China in 1967. It was during that year that circumstances changed suddenly and dramatically for the Gordon family

Chinas Cultural Revolution.

Chinas Cultural revolution has been going on for one year. During this time I have been studying it and it has been educating me. Now I will tell you something about the revolution.

The aim of the cult.rev is to smash and get rid of old bourgeois ideas, let the masses criticise the bad leadership, and criticise members of the goverment if they have mistakes and party members in authority. When I say critisise the bad leadership I mean we have meeting crit' them; da-zi-bao; and debates. A da-zi-bao is a sort of poster which is stuck on the walls in the streets so as to let people outside your organisation understand the struggle going on inside. Why does the party under the leadership of Mao Tze Tung want to let the masses do this? Because they want to make sure that the party is pure Marxist-Lenist. Only by letting the masses pick out party members who have made bad mistakes, pure Marxist

Cultural artefacts
Kim's wallet, decorated with pro-Mao slogans and featuring his one-way ticket to Canton (top); and Kim's school pencil box (above)



Acts of humiliation
Red Guards parade prisoners wearing dunce's caps listing their supposed crimes. Such acts of humiliation and persecution were inflicted on many people in official and intellectual positions

he absorbed at school. Kim's keen eyes, his lively and methodical mind and his sense of drama would all come to stand him in good stead.

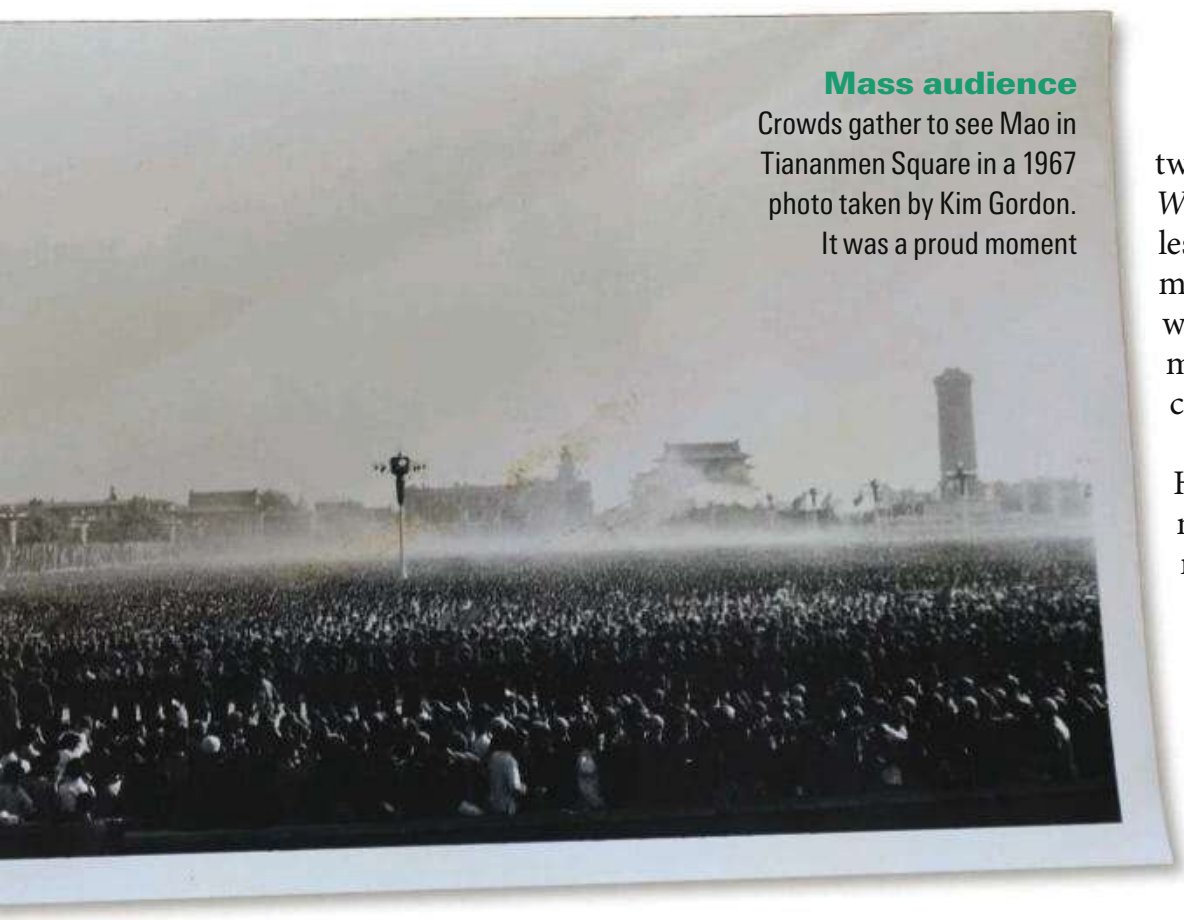
In May 1966, Chairman Mao called for young people to denounce traditional values and "purify" the Communist Party. Students thronged to join the Red Guards in Mao's "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution". Schools and universities were closed, and Kim – then aged 10 – and his schoolfriends became Red Guards.

"The aim of the cutl. rev. is to smash and get rid of old bourgeois ideas, let the masses criticise the bad leadership and criticise members of the government if they have made mistakes," he wrote to Peter. "Why does the party under the leadership of Mao Tze Tung want to let the masses do this? Because they want to make sure the party is pure Marxist-Leninist."

Decades later, Kim sees it differently, of course. "In our minds it was the goodies versus the baddies," he says. "There were bad people who, in our minds, would have been against Mao's dictums. And there were good people who wanted to enforce it. Now, obviously, it is – and was – a ridiculously childish and simplistic view, but then we *were* children."

Parents, teachers and other figures of authority were shamed, attacked and even killed. One of Kim's abiding memories is seeing the lifeless body of his teacher, who had killed herself by jumping down a stairwell.

Wearing a red-star cap and magnificent collection of Mao badges, Kim attended the immense Red Guard parades in Tiananmen Square, Beijing's vast central plaza. There he stood at the front of the crowd, below Chairman Mao's podium. He felt, he said, absolute pride: "There was Mao standing up there – the god. And… only a few metres away… millions of Red Guards were marching past, chanting their support, and these guys have been waiting probably all day and all night for these moments when Mao would appear. The amount of emotion, [the] heat and energy that comes off a million people! And you're a small part of this huge thing…"



ERIC GORDON/ALAMY

Mass audience
Crowds gather to see Mao in Tiananmen Square in a 1967 photo taken by Kim Gordon. It was a proud moment

During the Cultural Revolution, millions of people were detained and left to figure out the crimes to which they were expected to confess

In the autumn of 1967, the surge of nationalist feeling powering the Cultural Revolution turned against foreign "enemies". Kim's parents' contracts were cut short and the family hurriedly prepared to leave Beijing. During his time in China, Eric had been taking notes for a book on Chairman Mao. Now, he hid them behind a picture, because even friendly comment on Mao could be seen as hostile.

On the night of 4 November 1967, the family waved a tearful goodbye to their friends and boarded a sleeper train to Canton, the first stage on their journey back to Britain. They didn't get far. Perhaps an hour later, soldiers boarded the train. They discovered Eric's research papers and arrested the family. The Gordons were put into separate cars. Kim's response shows how completely he still believed in Mao's China. "My initial reaction was: 'Oh my god, I'm being kidnapped by spies from Taiwan or somewhere.' I couldn't believe that these guys dressed up as the army were actually Chinese People's Liberation Army [soldiers]; they must be enemies, because how could the PLA be kidnapping me? Obviously, I realised that I was wrong later on… We were driven off through the night, back to Peking. We were taken to this hotel… to Room 421. And that's where we stayed for two years."

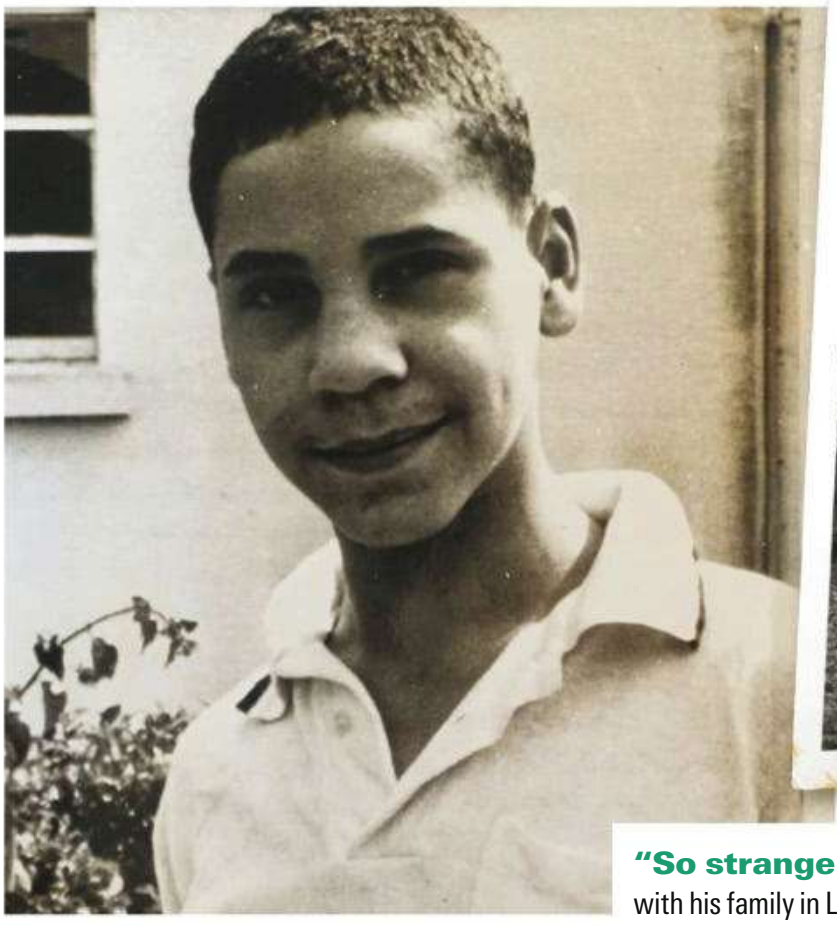
Throughout the years of captivity in the Xin Qiao hotel, no charge was ever brought against the Gordons. Each day, Eric and Marie were taken to the room directly opposite their own for interrogation, but their captors never explained why they had been arrested. In the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, millions of people were detained, most of them left to figure out for themselves the crimes to which they were expected to confess.

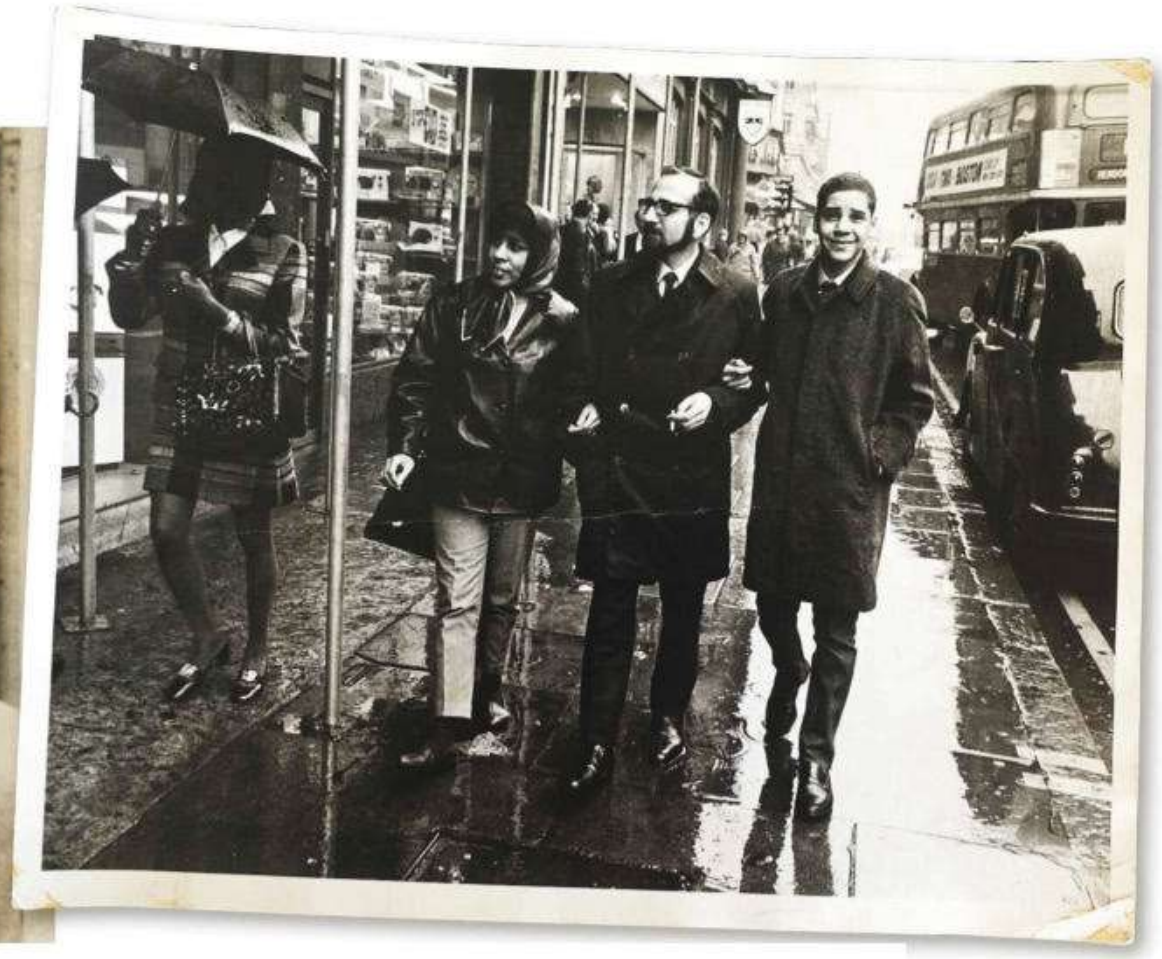
The repeated interrogations were the only times Kim's parents left their room. In this strange captivity, the family structured their days as best they could.

In the mornings, Kim had study time. English exercises were based on the only two novels they had packed for the journey to Canton: *Wuthering Heights* and *Oliver Twist*. Marie improvised lessons from the poetry that she could remember, and made up drills in grammar and handwriting. Maths was less successful because neither she nor Eric had much of a grasp of the subject. On a good day, lunch comprised a few vegetables and a small amount of rice.

"[Life] was," says Kim, "very, very boring." He reached adolescence trapped in a small room with no company but that of his parents, and with no space, nothing to do and no privacy.

The family used their time to discuss how to get out. "We were a tight little unit," Kim says. "Unlike other teenagers, [I was] part of making life-and-death decisions: whether to confess, what to confess, whether to retract the confessions, what the best strategy was. At one stage we wanted to plan my escape: the actual nuts and





"So strange to be free" Kim Gordon on his release in 1969, aged 13, and (right) with his family in London after flying back to Heathrow – an experience he calls "mind-blowing"

bolts of whether we were going out of the window or down the stairs."

All the while, the family watched from the window as the Cultural Revolution unfolded. "We would often see Red Guards parading people in trucks, with the dunce's caps and their arms pinioned behind their backs, being harassed and beaten," Kim says.

Each week, Kim was allowed a one-hour walk with a security guard. Speaking was not allowed, and the guards were hostile. Kim says they revealed their dislike of foreigners more to him than they could to an adult, calling him names such as "white pig" and "foreign ghost".

"All along the roads there were big posters of people who'd been condemned, people who'd been named, arrested, identified," he recalls. "You could see [who] had been executed, [who was] going to be executed." He also spotted workers digging metro tunnels and a ring road for this fast-changing capital.

Back in Room 421, the family did their best to make the evenings fun. They made packs of cards and created a Monopoly-like game they called Happy Hunting. But "after months and months of playing the same game… you completely understand the next thing the other person is going to do". Then they would sing. Kim's mother, who had attended a convent school, still loved 'Ave Maria', despite her communist beliefs. They created little plays, too. "My father would write one, mother would write one, I'd write one… they'd be done very much like radio serials, with trailers and a bit of music," Kim says. His tales included *Attack of Giant Killer Scorpions*, beautifully written in schoolboy handwriting on hotel notepaper. Each story stretched across as many evenings as possible.

The following year came and went, with no trial, no charges and no news. Then one day in 1969, Kim was sent to put away some cleaning materials in the store cupboard. There he came across a stack of Swedish newspapers, which he smuggled back to the room. The family managed to decipher an article that said that there were 30 foreigners under arrest in China. "Suddenly, we realised that we weren't alone," Kim says.

From that point, things began to move. Eric and Marie made progress in their interminable negotiations with the guards, who by now seemed keen to be rid of them. One interrogator even denied that the Gordons had ever been held captive, calling them instead "uncommon guests". Finally, in October 1969, the Chinese authorities released the Gordon family and they flew back to London. Kim was almost 14 years old.

"My abiding memory is flying into Heathrow," he says, "and suddenly seeing a city with lights. A huge, huge city… [We saw] people with fashionable clothes and food in the shops. It was just mind-blowing."

Eric Gordon would later write a book about his family's experiences in China, but back home in London, Kim and his parents never really talked through those two terrible years in the Xin Qiao hotel. Somehow, they buried their memories and moved on with their lives. Yet Kim never forgot how to speak Chinese, and still keeps safe his models, writings and possessions from Beijing.

"It is so strange to be free," Kim wrote in his brand-new diary shortly after his return to the UK. "It just can't be true to be back in England. I feel as if I'm in one of my dreams and I'll wake up and be back in the Xin Qiao." H

Guards revealed their dislike of foreigners to Kim more than to adults, calling him names such as "white pig" and "foreign ghost"

ERIC GORDON

Monica Whitlock is a writer, broadcaster and producer who works for BBC World Service

LISTEN

Monica Whitlock explores Kim Gordon's story in **Prisoner of the Cultural Revolution**, an episode of *Witness History*: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3ct1x5k*

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Emily Soldene
Actress, writer, rebel

As the darling of London's opera scene, and then as a journalist printing scandalous revelations about the cream of society, Emily Soldene thrived in the limelight. **HELEN BATTEN** explains why this trendsetting, rule-breaking, genre-hopping Victorian celebrity deserves to take centre stage once more

ON THE EI PODCAST

Emily Soldene started her improbably varied career in the music halls, where she became a leading lady, producer, director and impresario. She circled the globe many times, conquering Broadway, touring the Wild West and sailing to Australia and New Zealand. But it was her final reinvention – as a writer – that is perhaps her most heroic. When the theatrical world turned its back on her, Soldene kick-started her career once more, publishing two books and becoming a successful journalist. She had that rare thing for a Victorian working-class woman: a public voice, which she used to speak fearlessly about issues such as adultery and abortion. Though she despised the suffragette movement, she was the living embodiment of a practical feminism that would seem remarkable even decades later.

It was sheer envy that first propelled Soldene onto the stage. Born in 1838 to a bonnet maker in Clerkenwell, London, by her early twenties she found herself married with two young children, living in her mother's cramped lodgings and with the threat of the workhouse always looming. Having read a glowing review of the Italian opera singer Adelina Patti, the very next day Soldene spied a poster of Patti – with a chin that was "very long and underhung", as she described it – and marched straight to the house of a singing instructor.

Soldene, it quickly became apparent, boasted an uncommon ability to convey emotion through her singing. Her first reviews were good but she struggled to find paid work, so turned to the music halls. Women who worked in these dens of drinking, sex work and lewd humour had terrible reputations. For Soldene, though, they offered her the chance to escape a life of drab domesticity. Adopting the stage name Miss FitzHenry, she started work at the Oxford Music Hall in Westminster, where she became an instant hit singing tragic ballads.

> "She attributed her success to picking the best-looking women for the chorus and hiring a troop of cancan dancers"

Meanwhile, in Paris, the German-born composer Jacques Offenbach was revolutionising musical theatre with his new brand of satirical operettas dubbed *opéra bouffe*. That new genre gave Soldene her next big break. Early one morning in 1869, she was woken by frantic knocking at her door. The leading lady of the new Offenbach operetta *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* had fallen out with her leading man, she was told, and Soldene should come right away to take her place. She did – and was a triumph, being lauded as the darling of London's burgeoning light-opera scene.

Though Soldene's career so far had been impressive, it was not unique. But in 1871 she was given the job of producer and director at a new theatre in Islington, the Philharmonic. Her first decision was to première Offenbach's *Genevieve of Brabant*, in which she also starred. The production was a sensation, running for 18 months. Every night, liveried carriages lined both sides of Islington High Street, with duchesses content to sit in the stalls, the boxes all being sold out. Soldene attributed her success to picking the best-looking women for the chorus and hiring a banned troop of cancan dancers led by one "Wiry Sal".

Breaking the States

By this time, Soldene had a lively and – unusually, for a Victorian woman – very social life. She weekended in Brighton, attended races, played poker, smoked, drank brandy, and ate lavish dinners with the most fashionable men in the country. Still she wanted more. In 1874, she formed her own production company and hired the Lyceum Theatre in London. She had no capital, and it was a huge financial risk. As wives were still seen as the property of their husbands, it was difficult for a woman to run a business. Fortunately, Soldene's husband, John, was compliant, and she opened with *The Grand Duchess*.

Following this success, the US beckoned, and she embarked on a tour. The Soldene Opera Bouffe Company delighted Broadway audiences, and she became just as popular across the Atlantic as she was in England. A range of "Soldene" clothes was launched, her face adorned sauce bottles, and a gala ball held in her honour in New York City sold out. The only criticism levelled at her was about her weight, to which she retorted: "Everybody can't be as fat as a stoat nailed on a barn door."

Soldene travelled constantly throughout the 1870s and 80s, embracing one improbable adventure after the next. She drank brandy at Niagara Falls, was poisoned by sulphurous air in the Nevada mining town of Eureka, and

ILLUSTRATION BY **RACHEL DICKENS**

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drove a Cobb & Co coach through the Australian outback. The French-American doctor Cornelius Herz, whom she described as "one of the leading lights of society", showed her around the opium dens of San Francisco. She met Sitting Bull, who shook her hand with a "grip of steel" so painful she thought her "bones would certainly crack".

However, the popularity of her tours eventually waned as Gilbert and Sullivan's more conservative and increasingly successful oeuvre made the racy foreign *opéra bouffe* seem passé. Soldene, too, found that she was outdated; now in her middle years, she became a figure of fun, with her attempts to be sexually provocative labelled as "the very incarnation of vice" and "unutterably sad and ghastly".

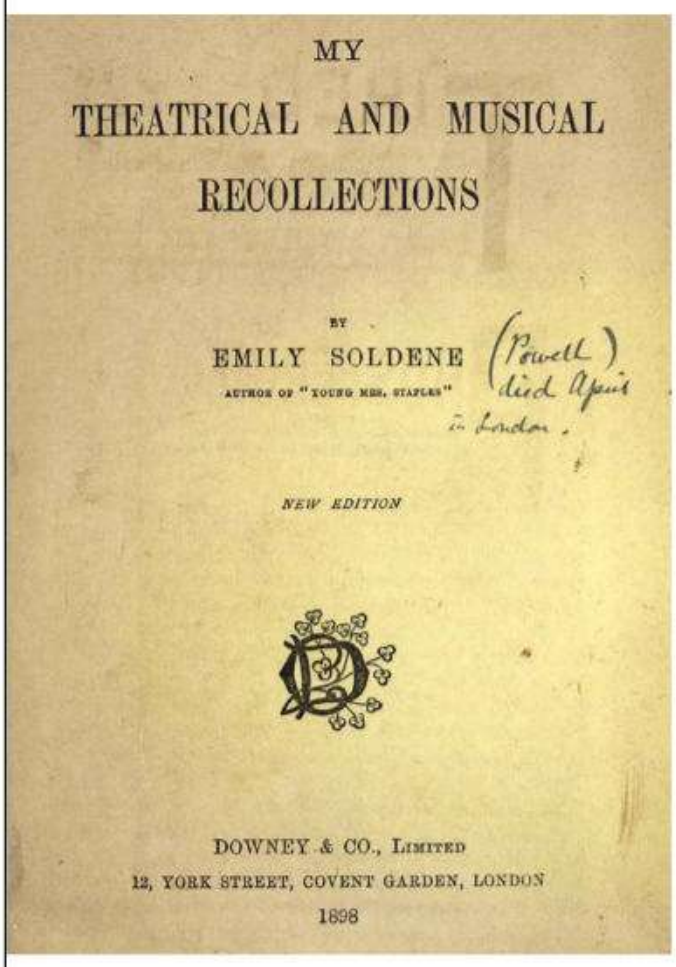
By 1892, she was alone and broke in Australia, in need of a new job. Luckily, she was introduced to newspaper journalism, later recalling that "I seized the chance, also the pen." Witty and insightful, Soldene connected with readers as she had with audiences. Within three years she was back in England, writing a column for the *Sydney Evening News*.

For the next 11 years, Soldene posted a weekly article to Australia about whatever she liked: her personal life, theatre, parties, gossip and big events such as the diamond jubilee or the "deadly dull" 1908 Olympics. Often writing about politics, she became much preoccupied with the career of Winston Churchill, whom she disliked intensely, declaring: "Isn't it a pity Winston Churchill has got a swelled head?" She had no time for the suffragettes, either, suggesting that "the women pull the strings anyway".

Reporting on technological innovations, Soldene was unconvinced about the motor car – except to spare horses waiting outside theatres in the rain. She was a nostalgic Victorian writing in the Edwardian era: she missed the dark nights without electrification, and rued the passing of traditional ways. The world of 1838, when she was born, must have felt a lifetime away from the 1900s.

There was, though, one change that Soldene did want to see. In 1896 she published her novel *Young Mrs Staples*, a tale of a marriage gone wrong. Extremely controversial at

Emily Soldene in 1880, in two scenes from Bizet's *Carmen*. Having founded her own production company in 1874, her blossoming career included tours of the United States and Australia



MY

THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL

RECOLLECTIONS

BY

EMILY SOLDENE (Powell) died April in London.

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MRS. STAPLES"

NEW EDITION

DOWNEY & CO., LIMITED

12, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON

1898

The frontispiece of an early edition of Soldene's memoir, which both scandalised and enthralled readers with its revelations about public figures – specifically, men – in the upper echelons of Victorian society

the time, it focused on society's sexual hypocrisy, arguing that "woman is not more chaste than man" and should not take the blame for sexual indiscretions. Men who had affairs should be revealed, it said, while unmarried mothers should be helped, not scorned; illegitimate babies should be legally recognised, not stigmatised. It was a deeply personal novel, though Soldene had always hidden her illegitimacy.

> "Soldene's writing gives us the unique viewpoint of an ordinary woman mixing with the ruling classes"

Miss Soldene's revelations

Soldene's novel was followed in 1897 by her memoir, *My Theatrical and Musical Recollections*, which scandalised the country and, naturally, became a bestseller. As one reviewer put it: "Most of the men who 25 years ago were 'going the pace' in London have read its pages with fear and trembling, while the rest of the 'upper ten' are chuckling over Miss Soldene's revelations."

She held back little, producing lists of public figures who had consorted with actresses and saying that when it came to revenge, "we women can wait". Lord John Hay was "fond of sitting in a box and criticising the girls' skirts"; Sir George Armitage was a "dear old man, like poverty, he was always with us"; while the famous explorer Richard Burton was "addicted" to long conversations with the ladies of the ballet and wore make up.

In 1912 she wrote her last column, which described her forthcoming Easter Sunday 10-course lunch. Having eaten it, she suffered a heart attack and died five days later.

Soldene may have long disappeared from the stage, but she deserves to be back in the limelight. Her remarkable career turns the stereotype of the Victorian woman on its head. Her writing gives us the unique viewpoint of an ordinary woman mixing with the ruling classes. In every sense, Emily Soldene has an extraordinary voice. H

Helen Batten is the author of *The Improbable Adventures of Miss Emily Soldene: Actress, Writer and Rebel Victorian* (Allison & Busby, 2021)

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BOOKS

WOMEN

“Generations of Rothschild women claimed front-row seats to social and political changes in Britain”

Sarah Crook enjoys an account of the women of one of the world’s wealthiest families › page 82

BRIDGEMAN/CHRISTIAN JUNGEBLODT/ALAMY

COLD WAR

“Martin Sixsmith discusses the Cold War in a broader context, including how music, art and film were manipulated”

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EMPIRE

“The contrast is stark between the beauty of the Benin Bronzes and the ugliness of their capture”

David Olusoga reviews an inquiry into the British raid of the kingdom of Benin › page 81

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“Mazower’s book is full of stories that humanise the long and bloody history of the Greek Revolution”

Costas Douzinas on a new study of a rebellion that shaped modern Europe › page 80

INTERVIEW / THOMAS HARDING

"The suppression of the Demerara uprising is a stain on British history"

THOMAS HARDING speaks to Ellie Cawthorne about his new account of a rebellion of enslaved people in 1823, which elicited a brutal response from the colonial authorities

ON THE EI PODCAST

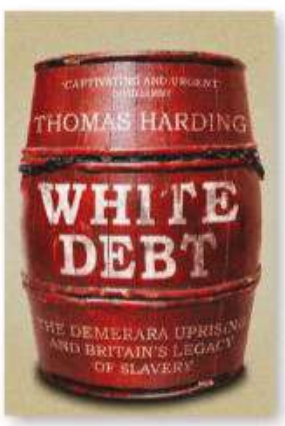
Ellie Cawthorne: In 1823, the British colony of Demerara was the scene of a huge slave uprising. Where was Demerara and what was the situation there in the early 19th century?

Thomas Harding: Before I started looking at this story, I only knew the name "Demerara" from the sugar that I put in my tea. It's the country we now call Guyana, just to the east of Venezuela, with a northern edge on the Atlantic coast. Even though it's part of South America, it considers itself part of the Caribbean.

In the 1820s, Demerara was a relatively new British colony, known for the incredible productivity of its slave-worked sugar plantations. There were about 90,000 people living there, around 2,000 of whom were European colonists, with a similar number of mixed-race people. There was a small indigenous population, but the vast majority of the population – around 70,000 – were enslaved. Most had been captured and transported in that generation, so they still remembered life in Africa. The majority worked on the sugar plantations along Demerara's north Atlantic coast.

Due to growing consumer demand back in Europe, these plantations reaped enormous profits. But life in Demerara was barbaric, partly because of how hard it was to grow, cultivate and process sugar, all of which would be done on the plantations. The enslaved labourers would work through the night, especially in the boiling houses. The conditions were horrific; life expectancy was as low as five years.

It's important to remember that the 1823 slave uprising in Demerara happened *after* the British parliament abolished the slave trade in 1807. Growing up, I was taught about Britain's supposed role as the "great emancipators". But I was never taught that slavery continued after 1807. It wasn't until 1834, more than two decades later, that a second act to abolish slavery in the empire came into force. In that intervening period, slavery and the slave trade continued in colonies like Jamaica, Barbados and Demerara.



White Debt: The Demerara Uprising and Britain's Legacy of Slavery
by Thomas Harding
(Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 320 pages, £20)

You tell the story of the uprising through the experiences of four real people. Can you introduce us to them?

The first person who I follow, Jack Gladstone, was a leader of the uprising, along with his father, Quamina. Thought to be in his 20s at the time, Jack had been born in Demerara (his grandmother Tonisen had been transported from Africa by the British). He was an enslaved cooper on a plantation called Success, where the uprising began.

The second character is John Smith, a white missionary from Britain, who found himself in a situation he didn't like in Demerara. Over the years he was there with his wife, Jane, he kept an almost daily diary, expressing his feelings about events in the colony.

Next is John Cheveley, who ended up in Demerara almost by happenstance. His family back in Britain was quite poor, he was unemployed and, as the eldest son, felt a responsibility to make money. Like so many British people, he saw Demerara as an economic opportunity, and ended up there working as a store clerk. Later, he was conscripted into the militia tasked with suppressing the uprising. Extraordinarily, his memoir survived, revealing his emotional response to what happened – his alarm and disgust at the brutal suppression of the uprising by the British militia.

The fourth person is John Gladstone, the largest owner of enslaved people in the colony. As well as being the father of the future prime minister William Gladstone, he was one of the leading voices of the West India Association – a lobby group for traders and importers of commodities from the West Indies. So he had a political role back in Britain and was at the centre of the fight to stop abolition.

Telling a story through four characters, you get four points of view that often don't agree with one other, which makes things all the more interesting. It also requires an enormous amount of original material – memoirs, letters, newspaper articles. After the uprising there were hearings, in which the colonists prosecuted those who took part. I was extremely lucky to have court transcripts containing dialogue. That really helped bring the story to life, and offered an enslaved person's perspective, which is incredibly rare.

How and why did the enslaved people decide to launch the uprising?

Jack Gladstone's motivation was to abolish slavery. I chose to call him an "enslaved abolitionist" rather than a "rebel" or "insurrectionist", because that felt like a better reflection of his agency and decision making. He was a considered and intelligent man, who wanted to bring about change in the colony. And crucially, he wanted this change to be achieved in a non-violent way.

For Jack, the key factors in triggering the uprising were the horrific conditions. But he'd also heard of other rebellions – the Haitian revolution, about 20 years earlier, and uprisings in Jamaica, Barbados and the USA. He would pick up news of these events from newspapers, from his friends who worked in the governor's office, or at the docks where he delivered barrels and hogsheads.

I assumed, wrongly, before starting my research that the uprising was spontaneous – an instinctual response. But in fact it took a lot of

CHRISTIAN JUNGEBLODT

PROFILE

Thomas Harding is a bestselling author and journalist. His books include *The House by the Lake: A Story of Germany* (Penguin Random House, 2015), and *Hanns and Rudolf* (Penguin Random House, 2013), which won the JQ-Wingate Prize for Non-Fiction

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTIAN JUNGEBLODT

careful planning and coordination. There were various meetings to decide on tactics, and it was clear from the beginning that the only way to succeed was for the uprising to span the entire colony. You can see how successful this tactical planning was, because when the uprising did unfold, the enslaved abolitionists quickly took over the colony and mostly stuck to Jack Gladstone's policy of non-violence.

Timing was incredibly important. They held off launching the uprising for many weeks, waiting to see if the governor [John Murray] would honour a letter from England that told him to lessen, or "ameliorate", the terrible conditions of slavery. Only when it became obvious that that wasn't going to happen, did they decide to act. They also agreed to launch it on a Monday, when people had at least had some rest on the Sunday before, and also so any last-minute changes could be communicated in churches across the colony.

What role did religion play in inspiring the uprising?

The church had an ambiguous role in the colonies. Many church members were slaveholders, and for the most part, saw themselves as guardians of the status quo across the Caribbean, tasked with "civilising" the enslaved people.

However, there were some dissenters, mostly non-conformists connected to the London Missionary Society. When John Smith was sent out to Demerara, he was told that his role was to bring Christianity to the enslaved people but not to disrupt the colony's social order. But when he was in day-to-day contact with enslaved people and witnessed the horrors of slavery, he found this to be a huge conflict. He communicated his disapproval of slavery through preaching biblical stories like that of the Jews overthrowing their enslavement in Egypt, and fought against the attempts of neighbouring plantation owners to stop the enslaved people attending service.

At the start of the uprising, however, Smith encouraged Quamina and Jack Gladstone to be patient and wait to see what happened. It was only after the uprising began that he essentially said: "You've started now, you need to finish it off." With hindsight his role looks more ambivalent, but when it came to Smith's trial, the powers-that-be saw him as an instigator. They found him guilty of inciting the enslaved people to rebel and sentenced him to death. [Smith died in prison before the sentence was carried out.]

How did the uprising unfold?

It started on Success plantation, about 20 miles east of the capital, Georgetown. The plantations were long, thin strips of land, about a quarter of a mile wide and about three miles long. This meant that people on different plantations knew each other and went to church together, and news could travel very quickly from one plantation to another. There were bells in all the plantations, so when the uprising began, Jack rang the bell on Success. As it spread from plantation to plantation, this bell-ringing was used as a way of alerting people that the uprising had begun.

> **"The militia marched forward and started firing. Within 15 minutes, at least 200 enslaved abolitionists had been killed. It was a bloodbath"**

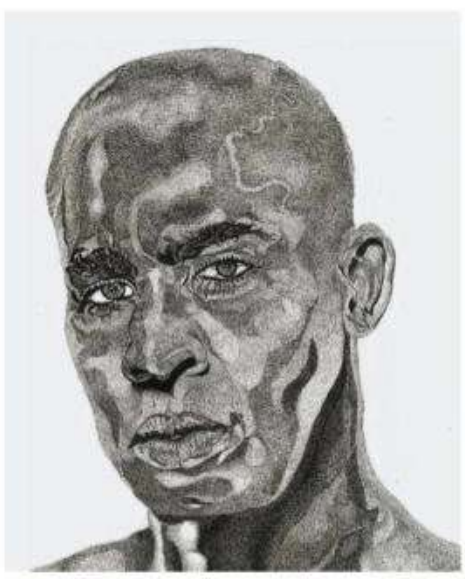
As per Jack Gladstone's non-violent tactics, the enslaved people locked up the plantation managers in the stocks and seized their weapons. By the end of the first night, more than 30 estates were under the control of the enslaved abolitionists. On the morning of the third day of the uprising, Jack Gladstone and his group met up with a large number of enslaved abolitionists at a plantation called Bachelor's Adventure. There they came face-to-face with the British militia.

How did the British go about suppressing the rebellion?

Soon after the uprising started, martial law was enacted and the governor commanded every white man in Demerara to join the militia. They went from plantation to plantation, brutally suppressing resistance and taking back control of the plantations.

Some people call the events at Bachelor's Adventure a battle, but I would call it a massacre. Around 200 or 300 British militia lined up and faced off against up to 4,000 enslaved abolitionists who, for the most part, had only hand-made weapons. Jack Gladstone had been very clear that no violence should be used. When there was a parley with the head of the British militia, Colonel Leahy, Jack Gladstone said that he knew the king wished to set the enslaved people free and that they simply wanted the governor to carry out the sovereign's wishes. But Leahy was adamant that there was no way that was going to happen. He marched his men forward until they were in very close proximity, and then ordered them to start firing. Within 15 minutes, at least 200 enslaved abolitionists had been killed. It was a bloodbath.

After that, the militia swept through the plantations, arresting enslaved people and holding what can only be described as kangaroo courts. Following a few seconds of conversation, they would find an enslaved person guilty without any evidence or witnesses, line them



A modern imagining of Jack Gladstone, leader of the uprising, who was deported to St Lucia after his capture

The missionary John Smith was sentenced to death for his role in the unrest

After being conscripted to the British militia, John Cheveley expressed horror at the suppression of the uprising

As the largest owner of enslaved people in Demerara, John Gladstone was an adversary of the abolition movement

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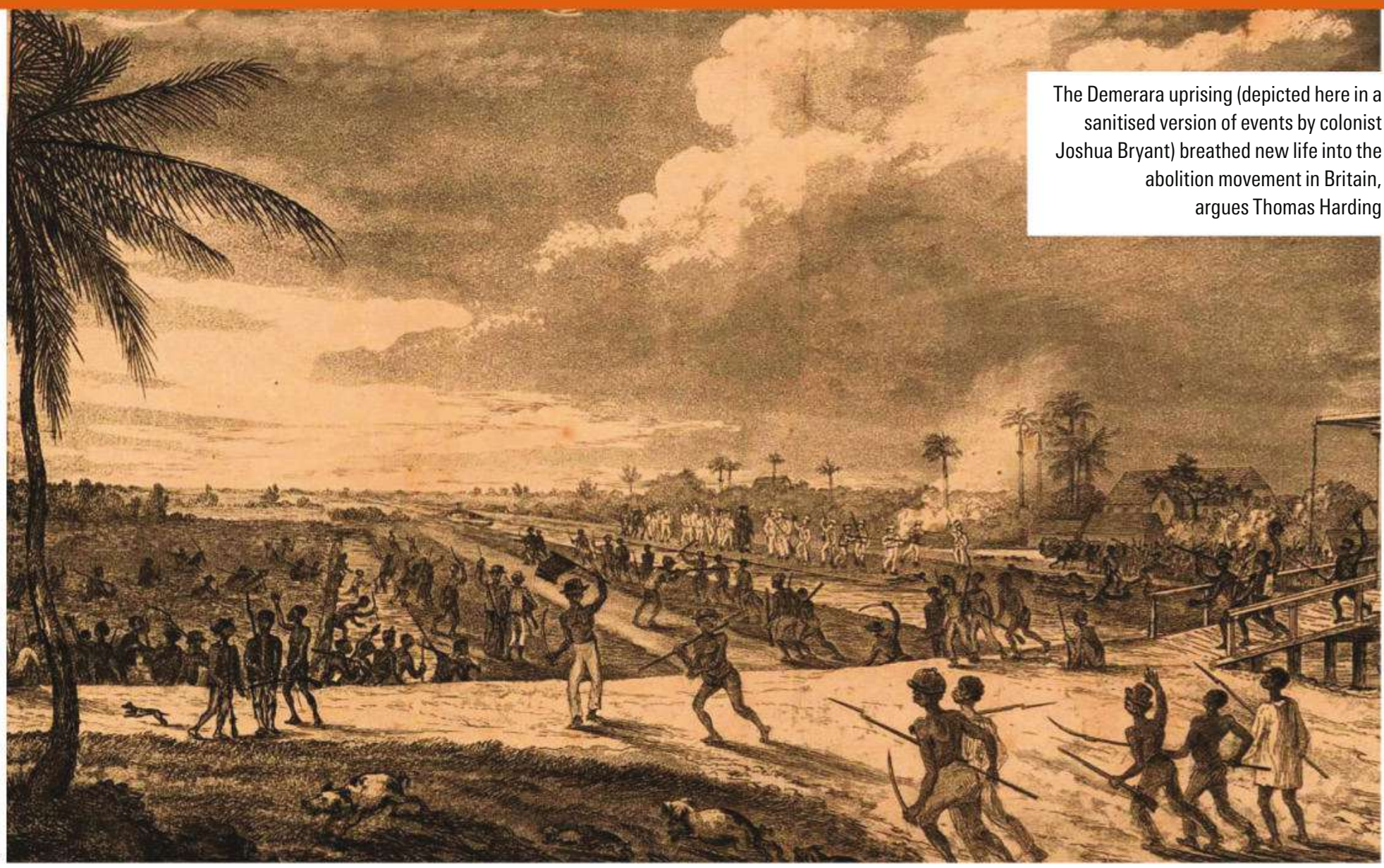

The Demerara uprising (depicted here in a sanitised version of events by colonist Joshua Bryant) breathed new life into the abolition movement in Britain, argues Thomas Harding

up and shoot them. Within a couple of weeks, at least 500 people, including those at Batchelor's Adventure, had been killed. After that, there were court martial trials, in which at least 50 people were found guilty. They were hanged in the old parade ground in downtown Georgetown, their heads cut off and put on spikes and placed both in Georgetown and at the entrance to plantations, as a message to the enslaved people across the colony. The massacre at Bachelor's Adventure and the events that followed are a real stain on British history.

You visited Guyana to speak to people about this history and its legacy today. So how was that experience?

Researching this story, I felt I had to go to the places where it happened, to walk the land and to meet people. I was lucky to meet some of the top historians in Guyana, who were very generous in sharing their research. Travelling through Guyana, I was struck by how the history is still remembered, not only by memorials, but in the names of the places and streets. Murray Street, named after the governor at the time of the uprising, is now Quamina Street, named for one of the leaders of the uprising. The legacy of the horror has been passed down the generations and is still remembered. Every year, there is a ceremony called Maafa, which commemorates the tens of thousands of enslaved people who were transported from Africa to Demerara.

The title of your book is *White Debt*. Could you explain the meaning behind that title?

The people of Britain benefited enormously from the wealth that came from enslavement for hundreds of years. The vast majority of those who were involved with the slave system (transporting enslaved people, running plantations, shipping commodities back to Britain) were white. So too were the people who profited from those imported commodities (like my own family, who had a tobacco business), as well as the general population who benefited from the wealth that poured into the country from the Caribbean.

According to the descendants of enslaved people I spoke with, the legacies of slavery are still being felt both in Britain and in the Caribbean. And white people are still benefiting from those legacies. Of course, it's a complicated issue, and there are other challenges at play such as wealth and class, but I believe that white people have a special responsibility for what happened. As a society, we need to address the debt that is owed from this horrific slave society that we ran for hundreds of years.

Why was the Demerara uprising such a significant moment in the story of slavery and abolition?

It's estimated that between 12,000 and 15,000 people took part in the uprising, which at the time was the largest slave uprising anywhere in the British empire. But it was significant for its impact as well as its size. The anti-slavery movement in Britain was in the doldrums in the early 1820s; it had lost momentum. But when news of the uprising in Demerara hit Britain, there was a huge controversy, particularly around the trial of John Smith and accounts of horrific treatment of the enslaved people. This conversation was taking place not just in parliament, where there was a two-day debate, but across the country. Newspaper articles printed trial transcripts verbatim and hundreds of thousands of people signed petitions calling for abolition.

The anti-slavery movement was re-energised to the extent that, by the mid-1820s, it was a force to be reckoned with. And in 1834, the Abolition of Slavery bill was enacted, leading to the emancipation of more than 600,000 enslaved people across the British Caribbean. Freedom wasn't immediate, though. Many enslaved people had to serve apprenticeships, and, even then, conditions remained exploitative. Meanwhile, more than 60,000 British slaveholders were compensated for their financial loss.

The Demerara uprising was very much at the centre of this shift in fortunes for enslaved people in the Caribbean. That's why those involved should be thought of as abolitionists and need to be remembered for their heroic role in the story of emancipation. H

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Listen to an extended version of this interview with Thomas Harding on our **podcast** at *historyextra.com/podcast*

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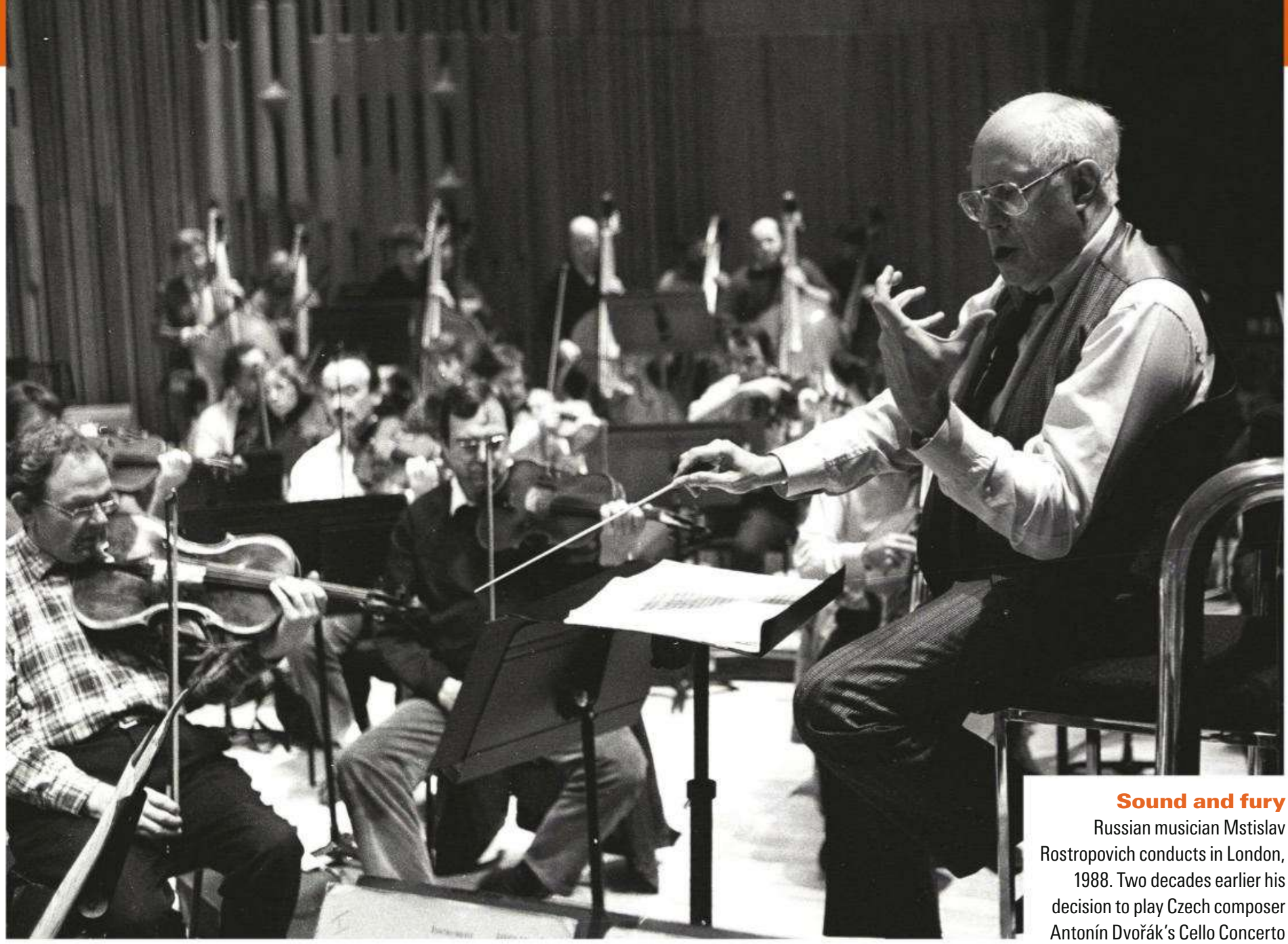
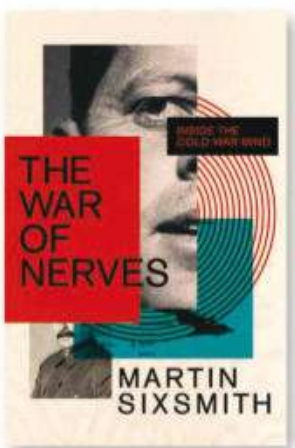

Sound and fury
Russian musician Mstislav Rostropovich conducts in London, 1988. Two decades earlier his decision to play Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's Cello Concerto at the Proms expressed his anger at the Soviet invasion that crushed the 1968 Prague Spring

COLD WAR

Battle of wills

MARK WHITE commends a wide-ranging investigation into the psychological dimensions of the Cold War and the crucial role fear played in shaping American and Soviet strategies



The War of Nerves: Inside the Cold War Mind
by Martin Sixsmith
Profile, 592 pages, £25

With this impressively ambitious and wide-ranging study, Martin Sixsmith – former BBC correspondent in Moscow and author of such works as *Philomena* and *Russia: A 1,000-Year Chronicle of the Wild East* – adds a fascinating chapter to Cold War scholarship.

Sixsmith does a good job of presenting the essential narrative of the Cold War. He covers its post-Second World War inception in the Truman-Stalin years, as well as other key events including the Cuban missile crisis – the 1962 military standoff that brought the US and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear conflict – and the Vietnam War. The improvement in relations between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s is also explored, as well as the ending of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet empire in eastern Europe and the fall of the Soviet Union itself in 1991.

Rather than provide a traditional diplomatic history of the Cold War years, though, Sixsmith develops a thematically rich and diverse work that explores in particular the psychological dimension of the Soviet-American contest.

The author delves into many instances of the psychological aspect of the conflict. For example, he discusses the work of Freud when considering how individuals replaced a sense of self with loyalty to an authoritarian leader such as Stalin. And he examines in detail the use of psychological warfare by the CIA, established by Harry Truman in 1947.

The psychological impact of Nikita Khrushchev's 1956 "secret speech", in which he denounced Stalin, is gauged; heart attacks and suicides among those in attendance were reported. Sixsmith also discusses the views of the great psychologist Erik Erikson on mass hysteria to explain the phenomenon of McCarthyism in postwar America.

In particular, Sixsmith produces an excellent analysis of the domino theory – the belief that the "loss" of one country in the Cold War struggle would lead inevitably to the "loss" of others – as a contributory factor in not only US escalation in Vietnam but also the Soviet decision to go to war in Afghanistan. Sixsmith cites the concept of loss aversion

ALAMY

in explaining Soviet and American fears of losing control of their respective spheres of influence. He offers a wonderfully compelling summary of the psychological foundation of the domino theory: "The cognitive distortion that leads to the universalising of individual threats convinced leaders east and west that the slightest lack of resolve was an invitation to the 'other' to trample on 'our' interests." All of this contributes to the strong central theme of *The War of Nerves*.

The book is particularly powerful in its assessment of the Soviet Union and its role in the Cold War, reflecting not only the research undertaken for this volume but also the time the author spent as the BBC correspondent in Moscow and elsewhere. Sixsmith met Mikhail Gorbachev several times, so is able to present his own first-hand impressions of the Soviet leader as "open and sincere but dedicated to the cause he believed to be right. He had an avuncular charm – in manner and appearance he reminded me of my own father – but he could surprise… And he could swear like a trooper."

He was also with Lech Wałęsa (an activist who led Solidarity, Poland's first independent trade union) in the shipyards of Gdańsk during the strikes in the 1980s that culminated in the toppling of the communist regime in Poland. And he was in Gdańsk in 1987 when Pope John Paul II spoke before huge crowds to make clear his support for Solidarity's efforts in challenging the authority of the state.

Sixsmith's political portraits of Soviet leaders are particularly full, perceptive and compelling, especially in the cases of Stalin (the dominant figure in the early part of the book), Khrushchev and Gorbachev.

These personalised stories enrich the account provided by *The War of Nerves*, as do the fascinating anecdotes supplied by Sixsmith. He writes insightfully on such things as the Cold War motivation behind the decision to feature the motto "In God We Trust" on all US coins and paper money in the fifties, and how the CIA's psychological-warfare officials influenced Ronald Reagan's use of jokes when visiting Gorbachev in Moscow in 1988.

I enjoyed the breadth of theme of *The War of Nerves*. As well as his assessment of policymaking in Moscow and Washington, Sixsmith discusses the Cold War in a broader context, including the ways in which music, art and film were manipulated by Cold Warriors and reflected the Cold War struggle. For instance, he recalls the great Russian musician Mstislav Rostropovich playing Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's Cello Concerto in London in 1968, the day after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, in protest at Moscow's crushing of the Prague Spring.

Another admirable feature of the book is the consideration of the British angle so as to shed additional light on the Cold War. There is a good discussion of the role played by Margaret Thatcher in developing a dialogue with Gorbachev – so shaping the diplomatic process that subdued Soviet-American tensions in the 1980s. The view of the Foreign Office is also often considered, to good effect, at other junctures in Sixsmith's narrative of the Cold War.

In some sections, a fuller discussion of the American angle would have helped, along with more substantial portraits of leaders such as Harry S Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and John F Kennedy. In particular, the Iranian crisis in the spring of 1946 should have been discussed fully. A key question for Truman and his advisers was whether Stalin had expansionist aspirations beyond eastern Europe; for them, Soviet efforts to maintain a postwar presence and influence in Iran indicated that that was the case. That conviction shaped Truman's policy of containing communism.

"When Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin in his 1956 'secret speech', heart attacks and suicides among those in attendance were reported"

It would also have been good to engage fully with the phenomenon of Eisenhower revisionism, the scholarly trend in which historians have come to rate Eisenhower as an outstanding president, including his stewardship of the Cold War. Would Sixsmith agree with that analysis? And more detailed coverage of the Cuban missile crisis – the most dangerous episode of the Cold War – would have helped, particularly Kennedy's handling of the first week of the crisis and the importance of his ExComm (Executive Committee of the National Security Council) advisers.

In general, however, Martin Sixsmith's new book is an impressive achievement: bold, ambitious and consistently insightful. In the crowded field of Cold War studies, he makes a notable contribution. H

Mark White is a professor of history at Queen Mary University of London, specialising in 20th-century US history

FIELDCRAFT STUDIOS/ADAM WILSON

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Islam Issa on Shakespeare's complex relationship with the Confederacy

"Shakespeare's home county of Warwickshire became a hub for Confederates in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. And we have this idea of Shakespeare legitimising a cause, in a similar way to how he was used by the Nazis and others. For better or for worse, there have been Confederates associating themselves with Shakespeare throughout history."

Kate Lister on the history of sex work

"Attitudes around sex work can reveal so much about a culture's values and how they viewed issues like money, gender and sexuality. In most cultures through history, the figure of the sex worker has been stigmatised – possibly because many of these were deeply patriarchal societies, in which sex work was one of the only ways in which a woman could access considerable power and money."

Ranulph Fiennes on fellow polar explorer Ernest Shackleton

"Ultimately, Shackleton became famous not for succeeding, but because in facing likely death in the most horrible circumstances, his crew survived. In all my 50 years of experience, I have never read or seen anything as horrific as his expedition was. I think that this survival story shows what a brilliant character he had. Failure meant nothing to him."

ON THE H PODCAST

GREECE

Fight for a nation

COSTAS DOUZINAS on a study of the revolution by which Greece freed itself from the Ottoman empire and was transformed into a self-ruling nation state

The Greek Revolution
by Mark Mazower
Allen Lane, 608 pages, £30

New dawn An allegory of the reawakening of Greek nationalism under Ottoman rule. This was one of a number of factors that sparked the Greek Revolution of 1821–29, the subject of a new study by Mark Mazower

In March 1821, Antonios Oikonomou – a sea captain from the Aegean island of Hydra and a member of the revolutionary *Filiki Eteria*, or Friendly Society – was drinking in a tavern in the port of the island when he heard that an uprising to free Greece from the control of the Ottoman empire had been launched. Springing into action he gathered a band of sailors and deposed the representative of the Porte, the Ottoman central government. Oikonomou was made sole governor but soon lost the upper hand. Forced to flee Hydra by rich shipowners, in December 1821 he was gunned down by hired men.

Mark Mazower's book is full of such episodes – stories that humanise the long and bloody history of the Greek Revolution. It reads like a long series of adventure tales, rich in heroes, villains, triumphs and betrayals.

The revolution (1821–29), also known as the War of Greek Independence, started as a series of local insurgencies. It brought together brigands, sea captains and young men who had studied Enlightenment ideas abroad and imported them to Greece. But local and class rifts soon came to the surface, and the conflict became as much a war among Greeks as an uprising against the Ottomans.

Its meaning is still contested among historians. Was it an attempt to liberate the ancient Hellenes, or a social revolution that brought Greece to modernity? For many fighters the war was religious – part of the *Romeiko*, the prophesied triumphal return of Orthodox Christianity. The main motive of the many Philhellenes (predominantly European volunteers inspired by their admiration of ancient Greece), on the other hand, was to fight against the post-Napoleonic reactionary restoration. They expected to meet ancient heroes but were disappointed. An English volunteer reciting Homer to the insurgents was met with total incomprehension.

These tensions, and the huge power imbalance, pushed the revolution to the brink of defeat. Only the victory of the united British, French and Russian fleets in the battle of Navarino in 1827 saved it – an episode that signalled the birth of a new geopolitical order and what became known as the "international community". After this success, and the formation of Greece, the idea of a nation state of self-ruling people spread across Europe.

Mazower reviews the conflicting political, ideological and academic interpretations with the aloofness that befits an intimate outsider. He stresses the agency of the people involved while presenting the heroics and defeats in a wider context that avoids monocausal explanations. He shows how the revolution swept away existing institutions, ideologies and customs and created a new way of thinking based on nation, faith, capitalism and constitutional representation. And he argues, compellingly, that the revolution helped construct a nation rather than regenerate a pre-existing ancient one, undermining an article of faith of Greek nationalism.

> **"Foreign fighters wanting to meet ancient heroes were disappointed. An English volunteer reciting Homer to the insurgents was met with total incomprehension"**

The stress on the political and cultural factors perhaps neglects economic pressures and the preceding implosion of the Ottoman empire. However, Mazower's storytelling with ideas makes this a book that will be enjoyed equally by lay reader and historian.

He concludes that, though Greek freedom was achieved, independence took much longer, and the struggle for national sovereignty perhaps "continues to this day" – as the recent travails of Greece over the national debt and the refugee crises bear out. H

Costas Douzinas is professor of law at Birkbeck, London

BRIDGEMAN

EMPIRE

Looting history

DAVID OLUSOGA praises a stark exploration of the blood-soaked British raid that plundered the treasures of Benin

Blood and Bronze
by Paddy Docherty
Hurst, 240 pages, £20

At no time since 1897, when the Benin Bronzes were looted from the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin (in what's now Nigeria), have they been discussed as much as they are today.

In the 1890s, debate focused on how it was that an African kingdom, dismissed and derided as barbarous and uncivilised by the politicians, press and public of late Victorian Britain, had been able to produce such exquisite works of art – objects of outstanding technical and aesthetic sophistication.

Today the Benin Bronzes are famous once again, while the British invasion of Benin has become infamous. The contrast is stark between the beauty of the objects and the ugliness of the history by which 700 of them ended up in the British Museum, with hundreds more in museums across the world. Now the art of Benin is at the epicentre of demands that western colonial-era museums return objects seized by the soldiers and administrators of Europe's empires.

In *Blood and Bronze*, historian of empire Paddy Docherty covers the restitution debate in his early and final chapters. The bulk of the book is devoted to exploring the broader history of late 19th-century Britain's military and economic forays into what is today Nigeria. The 1897 raid can only be properly understood, Docherty rightly states, when "seen in this context of British expansion in the wider Niger region". To explore that context, Docherty goes back in time, in particular to the 1880s when the British – in search of palm oil and other commodities, and determined to prevent incursions by French and other European traders – began to tighten their grip on the region.

Blood and Bronze is careful to highlight what that process meant for the people of the region, chronicling in detail the long list of unequal treaties, punitive raids and gunboat actions that punctuated Britain's west Africa power grab. Docherty powerfully draws from the letters and dispatches of British officials and traders – documents saturated with racial thinking – in which they coldly recount the routine deployment of violence or the threat of violence in the extension of British power, all done in the interests of "opening up trade".

Blood and Bronze starkly recounts the deadly imbalance of military power that in 1897 enabled the British to invade, capture and devastate the capital of an ancient kingdom, with negligible risk and minimal casualties. It is a similar inequality of power, Docherty notes, that convinces a number of 21st-century politicians and curators that their claims of ownership over artworks looted by force, during the committing of what Geoffrey Robertson QC argues was a war crime, have moral legitimacy.

By setting this comparatively familiar story in its less well-known historical context, *Blood and Bronze* reminds readers that the raid on Benin is now a cause celebre not because it represents the nadir of British colonial violence but only because the artworks that the British unexpectedly found and enthusiastically looted from the Kingdom of Benin were of such exceptional beauty. In every other respect, that episode in 1897 was standard operating procedure for the British empire in the last years of the 19th century. Indeed, many of the men who took part in the conquest of Nigeria had long careers of imperial violence in India, Egypt and elsewhere. The treaties forced upon these regions, and the military blueprints for the raid of 1897, were off-the-shelf templates drawn from the arsenal of imperial experience. H

GETTY IMAGES

A sculpture of a horse and rider, in the British Museum. A new book examines the looting of the Benin Bronzes in 1897

David Olusoga is a historian and broadcaster. His books include *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (Pan Macmillan, 2021)

YOU RECOMMEND

We asked our Twitter followers which books they would recommend for people whose new year's resolution is to learn more about history...

@HappyHistorians
I always recommend the Oxford *Very Short Introduction* series when first tackling a subject. They offer a solid overview of a topic and usually provide a list of books at the end for further reading.

@lunaalleygo
Ask a Historian by Greg Jenner is an interesting overview. Also I love the bit about hamsters.

@CoynieReads
Ian Mortimer's *Time Traveller's Guides* series. They were recommended to me by my A-level history teacher and were a great way of immersing myself in the day-to-day of different periods.

@robkellytweets
What Happened When is one of my favourite history books. Not only is it a beautiful hardcover text, but it's great for anyone wanting to learn about history and archaeology combined.

@Lomadia1
Alison Weir's *The Lady in the Tower* was absolutely fascinating. A really in-depth look at Anne Boleyn's last few days.

@BenDTReid
You can't go wrong with Peter Ackroyd's *History of England* series. Covers a lot of history, including *Foundation*, *Tudors*, *Civil War*, *Revolution*, *Dominion*, and this year's release of *Innovation*.

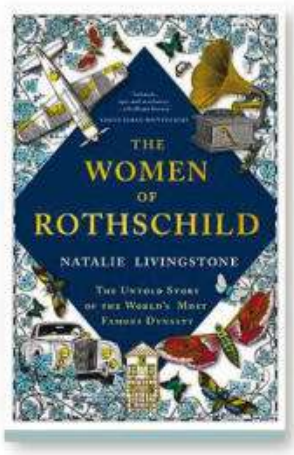
@gerrick54
Anything by Dan Jones – *Powers and Thrones* is his best yet. Marc Morris has written some good books, and Frank McDonough's *The Hitler Years* was brilliant. My favourite is Barbara Tuchman.

The works of US historian Barbara Tuchman (shown here in 1972) were praised by one Twitter user

WOMEN

Leading ladies

SARAH CROOK enjoys an introduction to the women of the Rothschild family that reveals how they overcame patriarchal ideas and anti-Semitic attitudes to help secure the family's future



The Women of Rothschild: The Untold Story of the World's Most Famous Dynasty
by Natalie Livingstone
John Murray, 480 pages, £25

In 1812, Mayer Amschel Rothschild, founding father of the eponymous bank, signed a document that was to shape the experiences, opportunities and challenges that faced his female descendants for the following two centuries. His will set out that the bank belonged exclusively to his sons. His daughters and sons-in-law, and their heirs, were not "entitled to demand sight of business transactions". The future of the bank lay solely in the hands of his male heirs.

As this gloriously illuminating and deeply absorbing book shows, however, this did not mean that the female Rothschilds had no role in the development of the business or the trajectory of the family. Indeed, the Rothschild women found loopholes that allowed them to play crucial roles in steering the family's political and economic engagements.

Some women acted as business advisors to their husbands, while others took up "feminine" duties, including hosting parties and dinners, with such skill that they created opportunities to advance their causes. "Theirs is not a story of outright conflict and contention," Natalie Livingstone explains, "but of delicate and sometimes difficult negotiations – between creativity and conformity, defiance and compromise, between family responsibility and the fulfilment of personal potential." In so doing, generations of Rothschild women claimed a front-row seat during a period of political and social change in Britain.

Livingstone makes lively use of the Rothschild women's letters and diaries to demonstrate their business acuity (in 1831, Hannah writes to her husband Nathan from Paris, offering informed projections about the state of the market), but that is far from the sole focus of the book. Love, family and friendship – as well as broader political commitments – are threaded throughout, as generations of Rothschild women navigated the sometimes onerous expectations imposed on them by society, spouses and, sometimes, one another.

The Rothschild women demonstrated a humour and lightness of touch that transcends the ages. Charlotte (1819–84) described her young, pampered niece as "gay as a lark, plump as a partridge, and as ruddy as a little red-breast". Livingstone also offers insights into the letters and diaries as projects in themselves. Writing in 1858, the young Constance (1843–1931) described how a potential suitor "did the greatest absurdities running after me and looking up under my petticoats" – only to later cross out "up under my petticoats" and insert "at my feet".

Of course, Constance and the other Rothschild women were not just navigating the waters of the patriarchy; they were also a Jewish family in a society replete with anti-Semitic attitudes. Livingstone details the female family members' interest in Jewish emancipation – and the toll taken by the failure of successive bills that sought it – as well as the fight for (male) family members to take their elected seats as members of parliament.

The women's remarkable talents, and the sheer range of issues with which they were involved – from emancipation to education, from politics to jazz, from the flea to feminism – has given Livingstone a wealth of fascinating material to work with. She has used it to write a warm and expansive book that never loses sight of the delightfully human people at the heart of her story. The Rothschild women have finally been rightfully placed at the centre of the dynasty. H

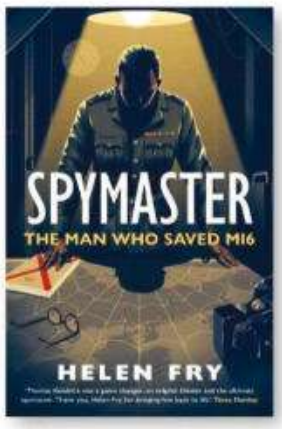
Sarah Crook is a lecturer at Swansea University specialising in women's history

"The Rothschild women found loopholes that let them play crucial roles in steering the family's political engagements"

Enchanting bride
The marriage portrait of Charlotte de Rothschild, 1836. Sarah Crook praises the Rothschild women's "humour and lightness of touch", which shines through in their surviving diaries and letters

ESPIONAGE

Out of the shadows



Spymaster: The Man Who Saved MI6
by Helen Fry
Yale University Press, 360 pages, £20

When someone you barely know invites you to a party, you won't spend long questioning their motives for doing so – if you have a good time. This was, in essence, the thinking of Thomas "Tommy" Kendrick who, between the wars, passed himself off as a lowly British passport officer in Vienna with a penchant for throwing cocktail parties.

In truth, South Africa-born Kendrick was a spymaster for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, commonly known as MI6. He ran a network of agents across central Europe, including Countess Marianne Szápáry, the mother of Princess Michael of Kent. After the 1938 Anschluss – the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany – Kendrick also helped to process thousands of visas that allowed many Austrian Jews to escape.

This intriguing individual is the subject of Helen Fry's detailed and assiduously researched biography, based on two of her earlier self-published works. With so little known about MI6 operations in central Europe, this is a priceless addition to interwar intelligence history.

Saviour spy
Thomas Kendrick in Latimer House, a British intelligence centre in Buckinghamshire, in the later years of the Second World War. The spymaster's eavesdropping work yielded important information for MI6

Readers may come away with a limited sense of Kendrick's inner world, but this is more than compensated for by the weight of new material Fry has unearthed. Her real triumph is in detailing the wartime eavesdropping operation run by Kendrick that targeted German prisoners of war (PoWs) in Britain.

"Herrgott, was haben wir die verkackert!" (roughly translated as "My God – what shit we served them up!") was a typical utterance by a German PoW after questioning in one of Kendrick's centres – before a hidden microphone picked up the PoW's account of key details he had held back in the interrogation.

Fry's central argument is that Kendrick's eavesdropping work "saved" MI6 after setbacks earlier in the war, notably the 1939 Venlo incident (the capture of two British intelligence officers by the Germans). Although this might be an overstatement – MI6 was not in danger of being shut down – her other argument is more convincing: that Kendrick should be seen as "the 'Oskar Schindler' of Vienna" for helping ensure the survival of up to 10,000 people, an epic feat for which he should be better known. H

Henry Hemming, historian and author of *M: Maxwell Knight, MI5's Greatest Spymaster* (Cornerstone, 2018)

MYTHOLOGY

Hunting monsters

Basilisks and Beowulf: Monsters in the Anglo-Saxon World
by Tim Flight
Reaktion Books, 264 pages, £15.95

Many people have heard of the grotesque Grendel, his mother and the dragon with whom the hero Beowulf contends in the great Old English epic poem. But the imaginative world of the Anglo-Saxons was populated by many more such creatures.

Tim Flight's new book starts with questions and beliefs about monsters inherited from earlier writers. What were they? What were they for? Could some of them be human, capable of salvation? Using illustrations from Old English manuscripts and artefacts, he examines figures as diverse as the Donestre – a dog-headed being who pretends to befriend the unwary traveller before devouring him and mourning over his detached head – and the Grendelkin themselves. (Two minor quibbles here: Grendel does not attack King Hrothgar's hall, Heorot, every night, as Flight suggests. Nor can Hrothgar or Beowulf properly be described as Christians.)

The Anglo-Saxons believed in many more monsters than the Beowulfian creatures. Some – such as the wolf – we would not now classify as monsters at all. Other creatures were to be found only in far-flung corners of the world – in the distant eastern lands, where Alexander encountered them in his expedition to conquer the globe.

Closer to home, fens, forests and uncultivated lands harboured creatures both corporeal and demonic, which Flight also discusses. These would fight tooth and claw to defend their territory from encroaching Christian civilisation, and they also made incursions into cultivated human space, attacking warriors and men of God, only to be repelled by heroes or saints.

Among these domains of the monstrous is that most dangerous expanse: the sea. Flight skilfully unpacks the evil ways of the whale – both the marine mammal and the cunning sea monster who pretends to be an island in order to drown poor mariners.

Immensely readable, thought-provoking and entertaining, this book is a splendid introduction to the thought-world of the early English. H

Carolyne Larrington, professor in medieval literature at the University of Oxford

HELEN FRY

HISTORY EXTRA MASTERCLASS

The British monarchy
with Tracy Borman

Tracy Borman is a bestselling author and historian, specialising in the Tudor period. Her most recent book is *Crown & Sceptre*. Her other books include *Elizabeth's Women*, which was Book of the Week on BBC Radio 4; and *Henry VIII and the Men Who Made Him*. Tracy has presented a number of TV history programmes. She works part-time as joint chief curator of Historic Royal Palaces and as chief executive of the Heritage Education Trust.

Each lecture lasts 45 minutes and is followed by a 30-minute Q&A.

All attendees will receive a **study pack** to accompany each lecture, containing an original document picked by Tracy to discuss with her in the Q&A, a bespoke feature, detailed timeline and quiz.

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Tickets: £15 per module or £60 for all five modules

This curated five-part virtual lecture series from popular historian Tracy Borman will chart the changing fortunes of the monarchy: from the bloody Norman conquest of 1066 through the upheaval of civil war in the 17th century to the reign of our current queen, Elizabeth II. It will also chart the evolution of the crown and explore the secrets behind its remarkable survival.

1. **Hastings to Magna Carta** – 7 January
2. **The Plantagenets** – 14 January
3. **Tudors and Stuarts** – 21 January
4. **Restoration to Regency** – 28 January
5. **Victorians to Windsors** – 4 February

Each lecture starts at 12.30pm GMT (7.30am EST)

LORENTZ GULLACHSEN/GETTY IMAGES

Book now at historyextra.com/events

ELLE ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

WORDS BY **RHIANNON DAVIES & MATT ELTON**

TRUE CRIME

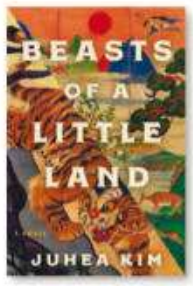
The Dublin Railway Murder
by Thomas Morris
(Harvill Secker, 384 pages, £14.99)

Murder mystery

In November 1856, George Little, a railway cashier in Dublin, was discovered dead under his desk, his head nearly cleaved from his body, in a blood-spattered room seemingly locked from the inside. The case gripped Ireland, with five suspects being detained and released – until one local women offered up a piece of crucial evidence. Fans of Agatha Christie will enjoy this historical whodunnit.

FICTION

Beasts of a Little Land
by Juhea Kim
(Oneworld, 416 pages, £16.99)

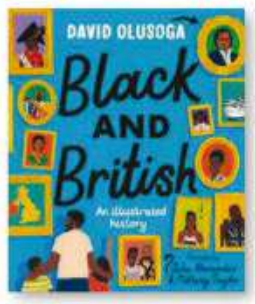


Running riot

Set during the Japanese occupation of Korea, this debut novel follows the fortunes of Jade, a peasant girl sold to a courtesan school who finds herself in Seoul; and JungHo, an impoverished orphan whom she meets there and forges an intense friendship with. But when one's path leads to fame and fortune but the other is drawn by the revolutionary cry of independence, Jade is faced with a life-changing choice.

CHILDREN'S

Black and British: An Illustrated History
by David Olusoga
(Pan Macmillan, 80 pages, £16.99)

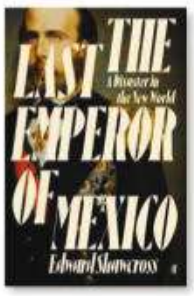


Next generation

When David Olusoga was growing up, he wasn't taught black British history. It was only in his teenage years that he read about this chapter of the nation's story, from the black people who thrived in the Tudor era, to the transatlantic slave trade. Through this superbly illustrated edition (another version was published earlier this year for 12+ readers), younger children can learn about this overlooked history.

GLOBAL

The Last Emperor of Mexico: A Disaster in the New World
by Edward Shawcross
(Faber, 336 pages, £20)

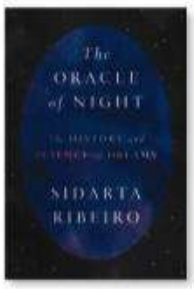


Game of thrones

The name Maximilian of Mexico may not be familiar to many today, but his reign had enormous consequences for 19th-century Europe and America. At the urging of Napoleon III, Maximilian, the Habsburg archduke of Austria, sailed away from his homeland in 1864 to claim a distant crown. But, as Edward Shawcross charts, his new kingdom became the battleground where the Old and New Worlds collided.

SOCIAL

The Oracle of Night: The History and Science of Dreams
by Sidarta Ribeiro
(Bantam Press, 480 pages, £20)

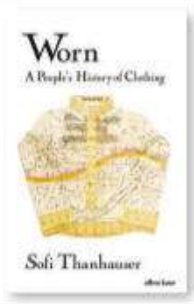


Dream analysis

From the night-time revelations of ancient shamans to the Roman-era belief in nocturnal visions as a direct line to the gods, dreams have played a key role in cultures around the world. This exploration of why we dream, and the shifting ways in which we have made sense of them, blends the biological with the historical to offer insights into a phenomenon that unifies human experience across the millennia.

CULTURAL

Worn: A People's History of Clothing
by Sofi Thanhauser
(Allen Lane, 400 pages, £20)

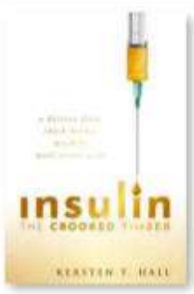


Material world

Writer and artist Sofi Thanhauser here explores the ways in which humanity's development is interwoven with that of textiles: linen and cotton, silk and synthetics. Throughout, she never loses sight of the human stories surrounding their manufacture, use and significance – indeed, the book opens with a tale of a teenage run-in with a paper dress that gave Thanhauser a new respect for the value of fabric.

SCIENCE

Insulin: The Crooked Timber
by Kersten T Hall
(Oxford University Press, 464 pages, £25)



Medical breakthrough

Derived from an observation by Immanuel Kant – "out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made" – this book's subtitle highlights its focus on the complex, at times unsympathetic, scientists who discovered insulin a century ago. The creation of medication from that hormone transformed the lives of people with diabetes – and this vivid take puts that milestone into its wider context.

BIOGRAPHY

John of Gaunt: Son of One King, Father of Another
by Kathryn Warner
(Amberley, 320 pages, £20)

Medieval power player

Rich and immensely powerful, 14th-century prince and statesman John of Gaunt was one of the most pivotal figures of his era – not just in England, but across Europe (to the extent that this biography opens with a cast list drawn from half a dozen countries). Kathryn Warner's detailed profile explores both Gaunt's tumultuous political career and his equally eventful personal life. H

WATCH

Cold storage

It was the find of a lifetime. Four years ago, while out walking round a recently dug gravel pit near Swindon, amateur fossil hunters Sally and Neville Hollingworth noticed the top of a fossilised leg bone of a mammoth.

Subsequent excavations of the site have revealed a mammoth graveyard in the prehistoric riverbed of the Thames. While researching the site will take years, the dig has unearthed evidence that may point to the idea of Neanderthals butchering the creatures with stone tools.

As Sir David Attenborough relates in a new BBC One documentary, these are discoveries that offer us the rarest of glimpses into life in the Ice Ages, more than 200,000 years ago.

Attenborough and the Mammoth Graveyard
BBC One / Thursday 30 December

WINDFALL FILMS–BBC

ENCOUNTERS

DIARY: VISIT / WATCH / LISTEN / TASTE
By **Jonathan Wright, Samantha Nott** and **Rhiannon Davies**
94 EXPLORE... Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire

In the boneyard
David Attenborough holds up a mammoth's leg bone. In his new archaeology special the broadcaster investigates discoveries that illuminate what life was like during the Ice Ages

The red card given to David Beckham during the 1998 World Cup is one of the moments from the BBC archives that Greg Jenner discusses in his new series

LISTEN

Points in time

In 2022 the BBC marks its centenary, and we can expect a season of programming across the year to celebrate. In part, this will inevitably be a case of Auntie reminding us what it's been like to witness major events in national history.

But another way to explore the BBC archive is to treat it as a jumping-off point, a way to illuminate ordinary lives (as well as the great and good), changes in society and the way the past plays into the present. This is the approach Greg Jenner takes in *Past Forward* as he uses a random date generator to navigate to different points in the BBC archive. As each show begins, he hears a clip for the first time.

One show, for example, takes us back to 30 June 1998, and the build-up to a World Cup game between England and Argentina. Much is expected of 23-year-old David Beckham, but he will be sent off after kicking out following a heavy challenge. What does the incident tell us about how, then and now, sports stars cope with a nation's expectations?

Past Forward

BBC Radio 4 / From Monday 3 January

LISTEN

Bohemian émigrés

In the 1930s, Belsize Park in north-west London was home to a community of Chinese artists, writers and intellectuals. At the time, figures such as Chiang Yee (1903–77), whose *Silent Traveller* books were hugely successful, would have been well known to the public. Today though, they seem largely to have been forgotten, at least in the UK, while other residents of the area – including Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore – are celebrated in Camden art walks.

Why is this? In a new Radio 3 programme, actor, writer and activist Daniel York Loh, along with writer and historian Paul French, chart the story of a creative community that deserves to be far better known.

The cover of Chiang Yee's 1944 book *The Silent Traveller in Oxford*. Yee is one of the Chinese intellectuals explored in *Sunday Feature: China, NW3*

Sunday Feature: China, NW3

BBC Radio 3 / January

Matthew Macfadyen, Colin Firth and Johnny Flynn star in *Operation Mincemeat*, which recreates one of the most remarkable deception operations of the Second World War

WATCH

Deadly deception

It's an espionage story that almost defies belief. In 1943 the Allies were preparing to invade southern Europe but were, for good reason, worried they would face heavy resistance. But what if the Axis could be tricked into believing that an invasion would be coming via Greece and Sardinia rather than Sicily?

It was precisely this subterfuge that was perpetuated by British intelligence operatives Ewen Montagu and Charles Cholmondeley. They oversaw a cunning plan to place misleading papers on the body of a recently deceased man and drop it off the coast of Spain, hoping the information would be passed on to the Nazis.

Colin Firth, Kelly Macdonald and Matthew Macfadyen star in a new film adaptation of Ben Macintyre's bestselling book charting the incredible tale.

Operation Mincemeat

In cinemas from Friday 7 January

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

These model vehicles were made by children in Angola, mainly out of food aid tins they had received from the Red Cross

VISIT

Helping hands

More than 150 years ago, the British Red Cross (first called the British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded in War) was formed, with its volunteers helping those who were injured in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. Since then, the organisation has helped the nation and the world in times of crisis, from assisting those affected by the mining disaster at Aberfan in 1966 to organising Princess Diana's trip to Angola in 1997, which brought worldwide attention to the deadly landmines that littered the country.

In December the British Red Cross opened a new museum and exhibition entitled Museum of Kindness, which shares the history of the organisation through the stories of people who shaped its past. Items on display include a lamp believed to have been used by Florence Nightingale or one of her nurses in the Crimean War – Nightingale was involved in the British Red Cross from its inception until her death.

Museum of Kindness

British Red Cross Museum, London / Open now / Booking required / *redcross.org.uk*

ALICE ROBERTS//DAN STEVENS

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit **historyextra.com** for weekly updates on upcoming television and radio programmes

HISTORY ON THE BOX

"The show captures the excitement of archaeology – we see those authentic moments of discovery"

The anatomist and anthropologist **ALICE ROBERTS** (left) looks back on more than a decade of presenting the BBC's flagship archaeology series *Digging For Britain*, and reveals what surprises the latest shows have in store

Why does *Digging for Britain* so capture viewers' imaginations?
I can't quite believe I've been making *Digging for Britain* since 2010. But I do have a handy reminder of just how long I've been doing this series, as when we set out to film the first series I brought my tiny baby along with me – and she's just started secondary school! I think archaeology has enduring appeal because it's such a fantastic way of engaging with the past – it's physical and tangible.

And *Digging for Britain* captures the excitement of archaeology. The digs are real, we see those authentic moments of discovery, and there's also a huge range of different sites and eras.

What are some of the highlights in the new series?
It's been a phenomenal year. The discoveries at St Mary's, Stoke Mandeville, for example, have been mind-blowing. Deep underneath a Norman church, the archaeologists found Roman remains, including some stunning stone statues.

Sister show *Britain's Biggest Dig* was archaeology on a vast scale, but are these big digs necessarily always the most important?
With large cemetery excavations, we can apply osteological and palaeopathological methods to understand health and disease in the past at a population level. Some large excavations might show us how a wide landscape was used, and how that changed through time. But small, targeted excavations can also help us answer key questions.

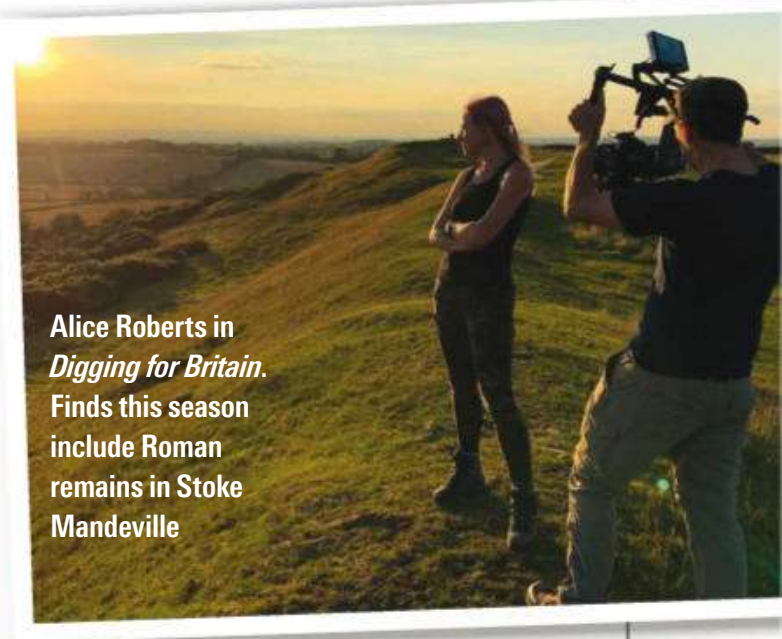
How important are new methods proving in the field?
What's really exciting is that there are always new techniques and methods coming along. Geophysics is now standard practice, before an excavation is started. Drones have made aerial photography of sites much easier, as well as being used to spot potential new sites. And on big commercial sites, the whole process of recording is now digitised, making it much easier to keep track of evolving discoveries.

Post-excavation techniques are also always advancing. We're now at the point with ancient DNA where entire genomes can be sequenced, for instance, and a new development in radiocarbon dating now allows mortar to be dated.

Has making the series ever changed the direction of your own research?
I've done research on some of the finds we've filmed, notably the infant bones from Yewden Roman Villa in the first series, where I noticed cut-marks on the bones that no one had seen before.

Do you have a favourite moment from the show down the years?
Not just one moment, but the whole first series, because I did it with my baby daughter and husband coming along with me. That was a really special time.

Digging for Britain returns to BBC Two in January



Alice Roberts in *Digging for Britain*. Finds this season include Roman remains in Stoke Mandeville

TASTE

Norfolk plough pudding

This hearty dish comes from Norfolk and was traditionally eaten on "Plough Monday" – a Monday in early January that was seen as the beginning of the farming year. Serving this pudding marked the start of spring ploughing.

Difficulty: 5/10
Time: 3.5 hours

INGREDIENTS

8oz self-rising flour
1 pinch of salt
3oz shredded suet (we used vegetable suet)
1lb pork sausage-meat
8 rashers of chopped streaky bacon
1 large peeled and diced onion
1 tsp dried or fresh sage
½ oz brown sugar
Water or pork stock

METHOD

1. Grease a large (1 litre) pudding basin thoroughly. Sieve the flour and salt together in a large mixing bowl and then add the suet. Mix well and then gradually add enough cold water to make a soft but not sticky dough.
2. Roll the dough into a ball and knead lightly. Cut off one third of the dough and put it to one side; you'll need this for the lid of the pudding. Roll out the rest of the dough and line the pudding basin.
3. In another bowl mix the sausage-meat, bacon, onion, sage and sugar together. Season to taste and add the mixture to the lined pudding basin. Pour in enough water or pork stock to cover the filling.
4. Roll out the remaining pastry and add to the top of the pudding basin. Pinch together the edges to make sure the pudding is sealed. Cover the bowl with a large circle of grease-proof paper (with a pleat in to allow for expansion of the pudding) and top with pleated kitchen foil. Tie with string and make a loop so you can retrieve the pudding when hot.
5. Steam the pudding for approx 3.5 hours.

This pork-filled suet pastry traditionally marked the start of spring ploughing

Andy Warhol (bottom centre) in New York, 1966. A new series uses the pop artist's life as a lens through which to examine 20th-century America

SAMANTHA NOTT/BBC

WATCH

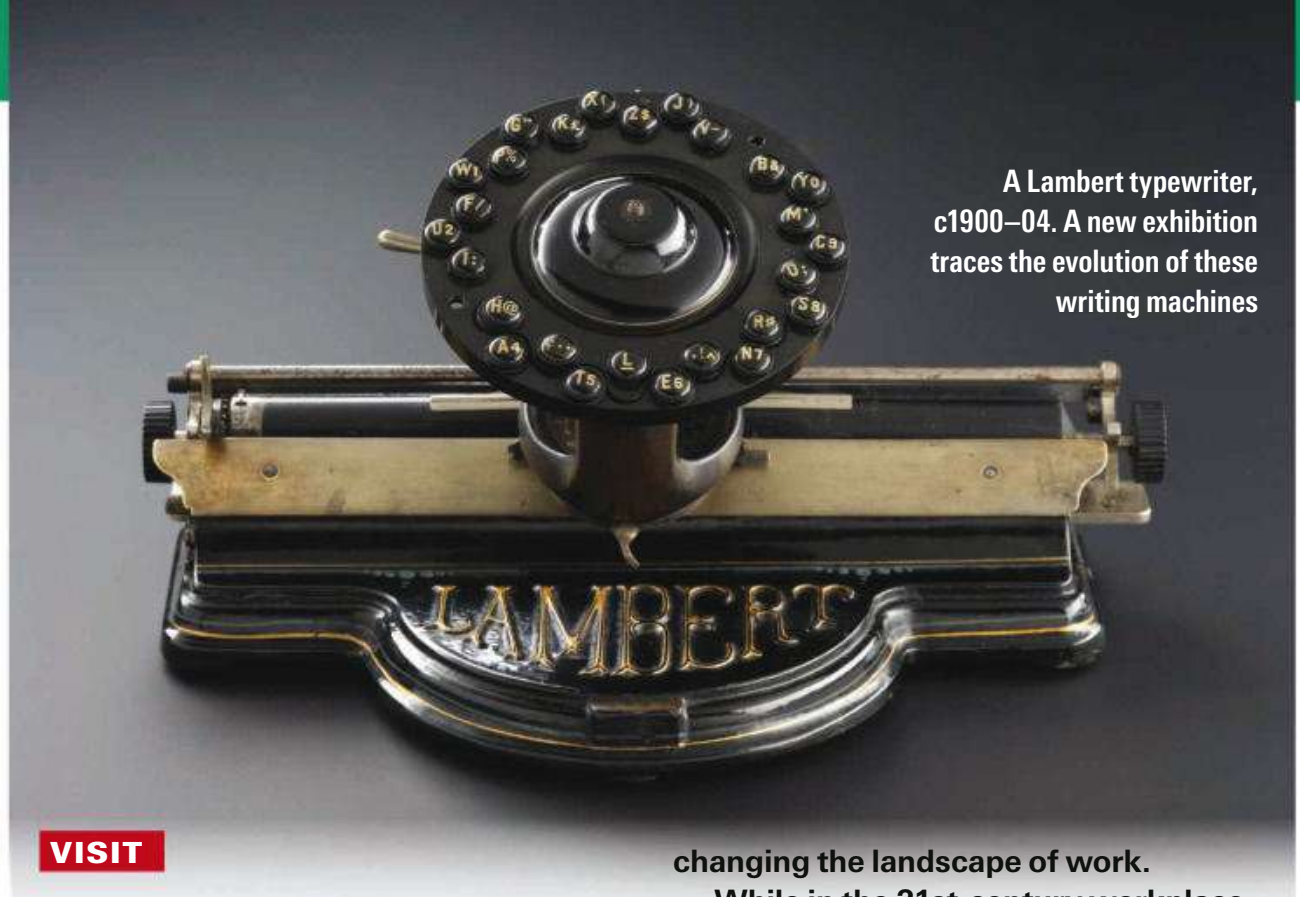
A life in pictures

Born on the cusp of the Great Depression, pop artist Andy Warhol (1928–87) lived through the Second World War, the rise of consumerism and the social upheavals of the 1960s. The son of working-class immigrants from what's now Slovakia, his subsequent success enabled him to see the upper echelons of American society at first hand.

Warhol was thus both an outsider and, later, the kind of A-list celebrity he celebrated and critiqued in his work. This makes his life a fascinating prism through which to view 20th-century American history – which is precisely what *Andy Warhol's America* does.

The first of three episodes, 'Living the Dream', covers the years of Warhol's upbringing in Pittsburgh and his early success. The second instalment, 'The American Nightmare', looks at the 1960s – the years when Warhol's Factory was the meeting point for the New York art scene. Lastly, 'Life After Death' shows the older Warhol, when he became obsessed with money and security, yet in his work he documented those on society's margins.

Andy Warhol's America
BBC Two / January



A Lambert typewriter, c1900–04. A new exhibition traces the evolution of these writing machines

VISIT

Inventive type

The rise of typewriters transformed the way we communicate, and the consequences of this were felt across the world. The devices became a staple of offices and were soon seen as the ultimate emblem of working women, adopted by secretaries worldwide. These time-saving machines were also invaluable to women who wanted to start their own business ventures, changing the landscape of work.

While in the 21st-century workplace they've been usurped by computers, typewriters are still lauded in the design world for their timeless appearance.

A new exhibition charts the social and technological influences of the typewriter, and how they have evolved from the cumbersome early iterations to sleek style icons.

The Typewriter Revolution

National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh / Until 17 April / Free entry / *nms.ac.uk*

WATCH

Conflict postponed

The Munich Agreement, in which Britain and France agreed to Nazi Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia, has come to be seen as emblematic of the failures of appeasement. Its most visible symbol was the piece of paper Neville Chamberlain held aloft at Heston Aerodrome after arriving back in Britain on 30 September 1938. It was a document that carried both the prime minister's signature and that of Adolf Hitler, but which signified little, let alone "peace for our time".

But has history been too harsh in its judgment of Chamberlain? Could you not argue he bought Britain time to prepare for war? This is one of the ideas that underpinned Robert Harris's 2017 novel *Munich*, which has now been adapted as a feature-length drama that sees Jeremy Irons bringing world-weary gravitas to his role as Chamberlain.

George MacKay (*1917*) and Jannis Niewöhner also star as Hugh Legat and Paul von Hartmann, two men who were friends at Oxford and now work for their respective governments.

Amid the diplomatic back and forth, the what-if idea that drives the plot forward here is the notion that Munich represented an opportunity to topple Hitler from power.

Munich: The Edge of War

In select cinemas from Friday 7 January and streaming via Netflix from Friday 21 January

Jeremy Irons plays Neville Chamberlain in *Munich*, a film that considers whether appeasement bought Britain time to prepare for war

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

IWM Duxford's new exhibition brings together the largest display of Spitfires in the world. Visitors also have the chance to book a tour that takes them inside the cockpit (pictured)

VISIT

Aerial icon

IWM Duxford is often called "the home of the Spitfire". In 1938 its airfield made history when the RAF squadron that was based there became the first in the country to receive the aircraft. With its elliptical wings and Rolls Royce engine, the Spitfire soon cemented itself as an invaluable part of the RAF's arsenal, proving particularly crucial during the Battle of Britain in 1940.

The museum's new exhibition shows the evolution of these iconic aircraft, with the largest display of Spitfires in the world. Twelve Spitfires of different marks are on show, including IWM's own Mk Ia Spitfire – one of a small number of Spitfires that were flown in the war and remain airworthy today. Each plane is accompanied by information to reveal how the warbird evolved throughout the conflict.

The exhibition is complemented by a range of guided tours, expert talks, events and family activities that dig deeper into the history of this famous fighter plane.

Spitfire: Evolution of an Icon
IWM Duxford, Cambridgeshire / Until 20 February /
Guided tours available / *iwm.org.uk*

The Alexander Palace egg, made for Tsar Nicholas II. A selection of Imperial Eggs feature in a new V&A exhibition

VISIT

All that glitters

Russian goldsmith Peter Carl Fabergé was famous for his finely wrought jewellery – and, above all, the collection of 50 intricate Imperial Eggs his company created for the Russian tsars. Although the name "Fabergé" is intimately linked to the Romanovs and Russia, the company was beloved in Britain, too. It opened a London branch in 1903, with the great and the good of Edwardian society flocking to the shop, including King Edward VII.

Fabergé's influence in Britain is explored in a new exhibition that illuminates his great successes in the country as well as the world's obsession with the opulence of his creations. Around 200 objects are included in the display, with a particular highlight being several Imperial Easter Eggs that have never before been displayed in the UK. H

Fabergé in London: Romance to Revolution
V&A, London / Until 8 May /
Booking required / *vam.ac.uk*

IWM/V&A

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Rich in royal history

Burgeoning from an Anglo-Saxon manor house into a magnificent Tudor residence, Sudeley Castle hosted successive monarchs before being ravaged during the Civil War. **CLEMENTINE BERESFORD** explores the evocative ruins and rich royal history of this hidden gem in the Cotswolds

Nestled in a fold of the Cotswold Hills lies Sudeley Castle. Its basic layout has changed little since it was built by Ralph Boteler, 1st Baron Sudeley, in the 15th century: occasional towers and two-storey crenellated buildings with mullioned windows surround inner and outer courtyards, with a tithe barn and chapel nearby. Among these structures, bedecked with climbing roses, clematis and ivy, stand romantic ruins revealing the destruction wrought upon the castle in later years, and providing a gateway into Sudeley's remarkable past.

Those ruins date from 1649, when parliamentarian troops were ordered to "slight" the castle. By then, Roundheads had occupied Sudeley for nearly five years, having besieged it twice before, and now sought to render it untenable as a future royalist stronghold.

The site had been entwined with royal history since long before Charles I installed his nephew and cavalry commander, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, at Sudeley in the early years of the war. (Charles himself reputedly slept in the exquisite four-poster bed now displayed in the castle's Chandos Bedroom.) In the 10th century the manor house and estate at Sudeley had been gifted by King Æthelred to his daughter, Goda, and over several centuries the crown intermittently owned, architecturally embellished, gifted and exploited the site.

Richard of Gloucester, who owned Sudeley from 1471, used rumours of Edward IV's clandestine marriage at the castle to legitimise his claim to the throne as Richard III. Later, Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I visited on royal progresses, and Katherine Parr is buried in the chapel, having married the 1st Baron Seymour of Sudeley after Henry's death.

In 1788, curious about the damage wreaked by Cromwell's assault, George III climbed the Octagon Tower to investigate a cannonball hole – only to take a tumble, and be saved from injury by a gallant housekeeper.

Today, Sudeley's rich royal history is told through a superb exhibition in its oldest wing. Treasures include Elizabeth I's beautifully embroidered satin christening robe and Henry VIII's exquisitely illustrated Bohun Book of Hours. Of the many relics linked to Katherine Parr, particularly fascinating items include her love letters and a copy of her own book *Prayers or Meditations*, bound in red silk and embroidered with gold and silver threads. Other keepsakes that emerged after the discovery of her tomb in a ruined chapel in 1782 include fragments of her dress and a lock of hair.

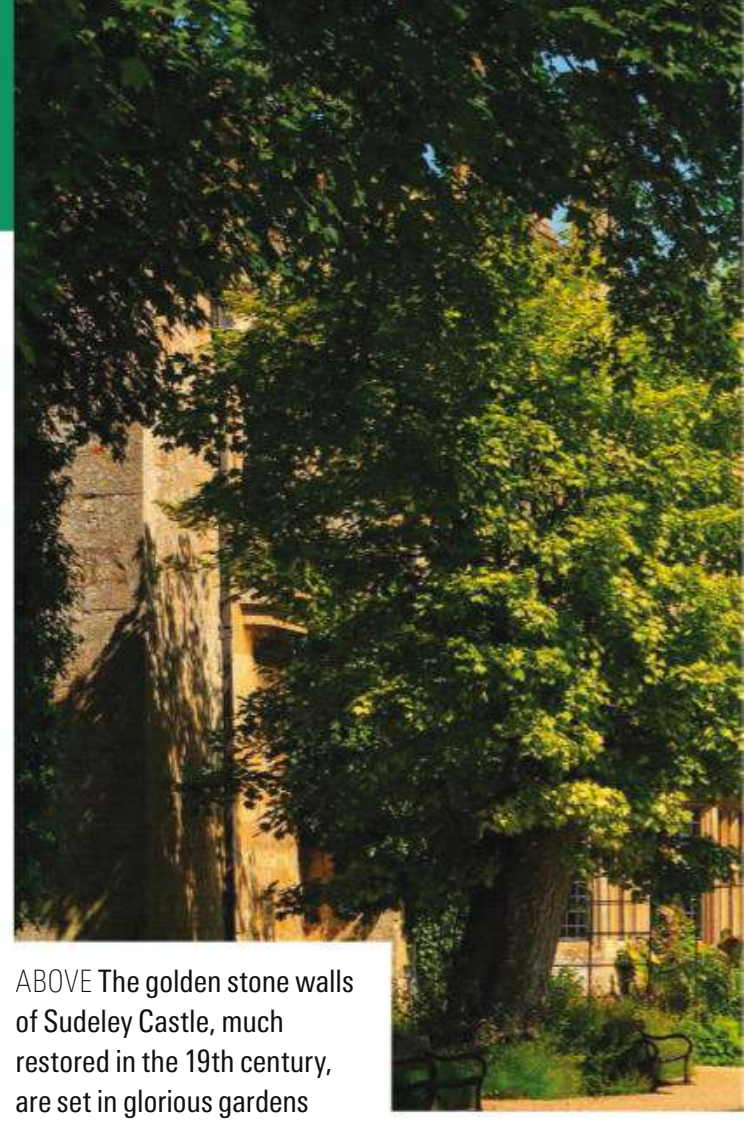
Stepping into the family's wing, the castle's royal story continues through Katherine's anterooms and Lucas de Heere's 1572 painting *The Allegory of the Tudor Succession*, which features various members of the Tudor dynasty. The ruins of Richard III's once-splendid banqueting hall, damaged by Cromwell's troops, now offer a picturesque canvas for nature's palette, with foliage creeping through the oriel windows and eerily elevated empty fireplaces. The nearby Queens' Garden, named for the various female sovereigns who have visited the castle, boasts many dozens of varieties of rose.

Indeed, Sudeley today is blooming. Its renaissance was begun by the Dent family, who bought the castle in 1837 and rescued it from the ruinous decay that beset it after the Civil Wars, and was continued by their descendants, the Dent-Brocklehursts, who live at the castle to this day. Thanks to their efforts, visitors continue to be charmed by its golden stone walls, historical connections and idyllic setting among pillowy, verdant hills. H

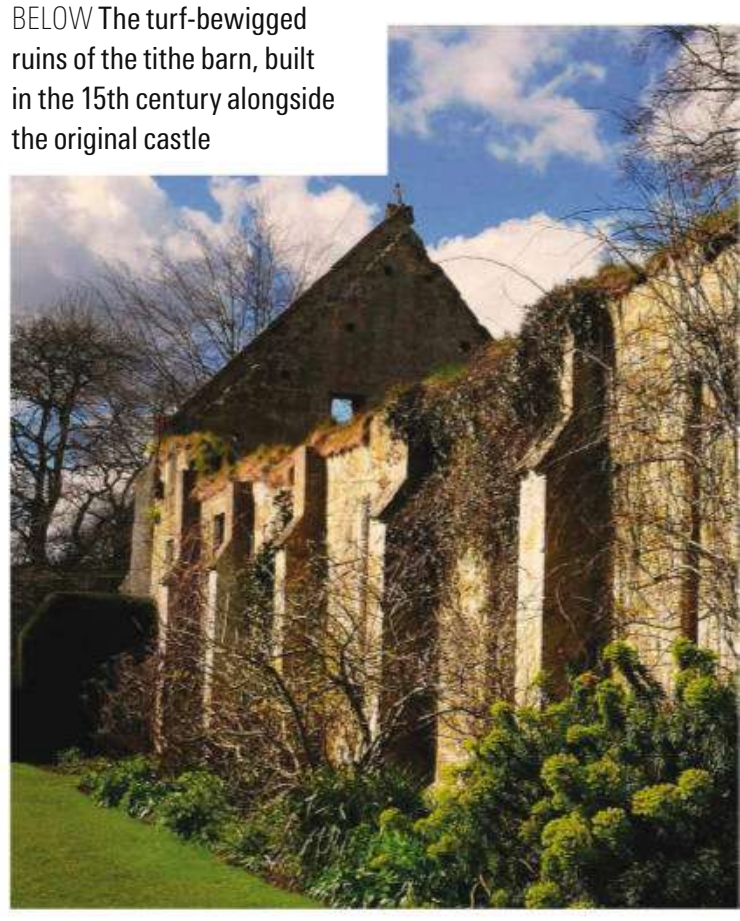
"Bedecked with climbing roses, clematis and ivy, romantic medieval ruins reveal the destruction later wrought upon the castle"

Clementine Beresford is a cultural historian, specialising in Tudor and Stuart royal ceremony

VISIT For more information on visiting Sudeley Castle, go to **sudeleycastle.co.uk**

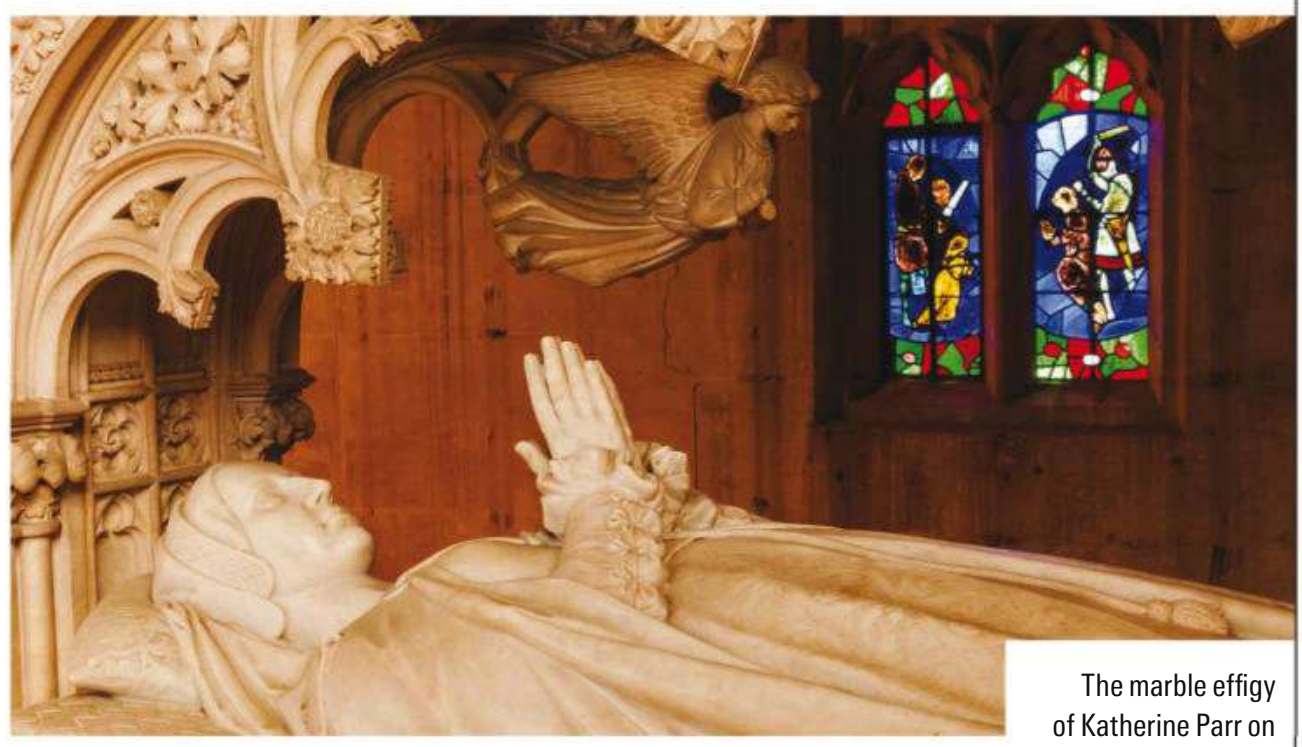


ABOVE The golden stone walls of Sudeley Castle, much restored in the 19th century, are set in glorious gardens BELOW The turf-bewigged ruins of the tithe barn, built in the 15th century alongside the original castle



The Queens' Garden at Sudeley Castle, where many dozens of rose varieties bloom

An early edition of *Prayers or Meditations*, written in 1545 by Henry VIII's last queen, Katherine Parr, and displayed at Sudeley Castle



The marble effigy of Katherine Parr on her tomb in St Mary's Church at Sudeley Castle, where she died in 1548 from complications following childbirth

Sudeley commands extensive grounds, lying alongside the ancient village of Winchcombe in the Cotswold Hills

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/DREAMSTIME/
SUDELEY CASTLE & GARDENS

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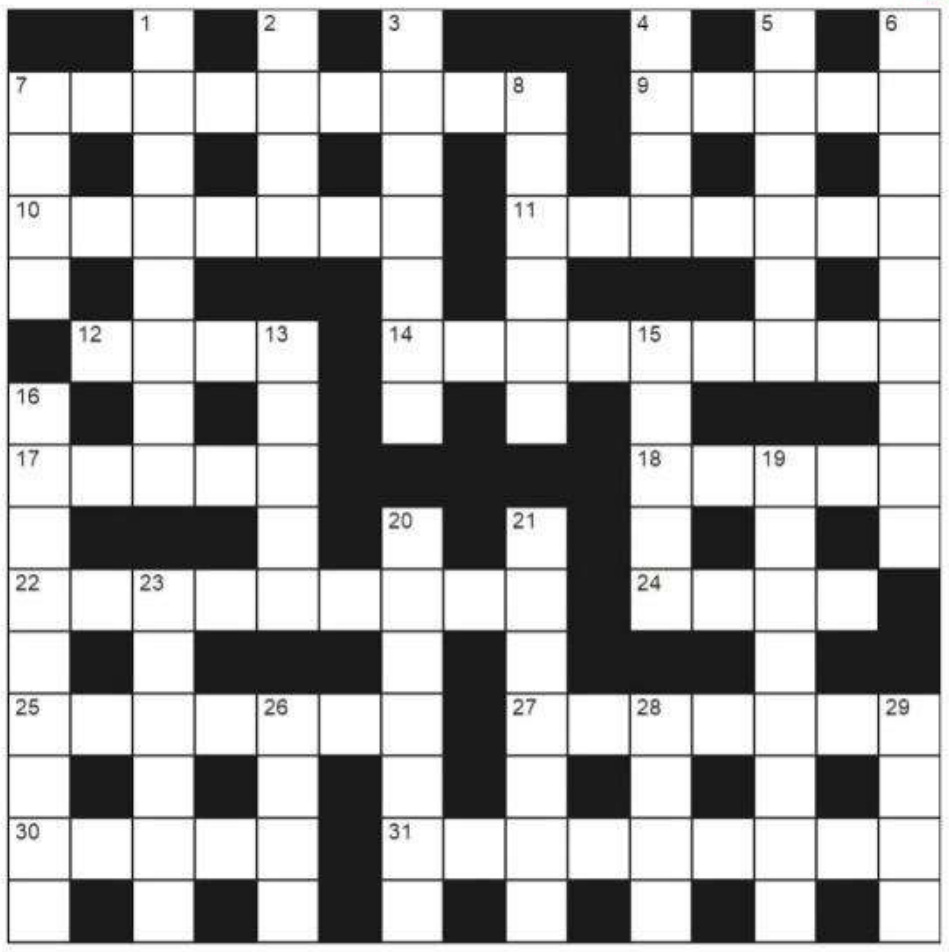
When There Were Birds

By Roy and Lesley Adkins

This social history delves into the complex relationship between humans and birds in Britain over the centuries. Birds have played a crucial role in the island's history, influencing sports, fashions and industries. These winged creatures are also entwined in a tangle of traditions, supernatural associations and superstitions.



Across

7 Members of Jewish sect that died out with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 (9)
9 Combining term, as in the First ____-Turkish War (1897) (5)
10 City of northern England, founded by the Romans, and one of the last English towns to fall to William the Conqueror (7)
11 Two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle used in battle and racing, for example by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans (7)
12 Celebrated Roman historian who thrived in the time of Octavian/Augustus (4)
14 US Republican presidential candidate beaten by Lyndon B Johnson in 1964 (9)
17 Battle of February 1807 pitting France against Russia and Prussia, resulting in Napoleon's first major deadlock (5)
18 English philosopher John ____, an inspiration for the European Enlightenment and the US Constitution (5)
22 Native American woman who achieved lasting fame as an interpreter and advisor on the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804–06 (9)
24 John Stuart ____, English philosopher, a major proponent of utilitarianism (4)
25 American president born in poverty in a backwoods cabin in Kentucky (7)
27 African leader deposed in 1979 by Tanzanian forces aided by rebels from his own army (3,4)
30 Prime minister whose indecisive leadership was a major cause of the loss of Britain's American colonies (5)
31 On moving to England from her native America she married into the British aristocracy, later becoming an MP (1919) (4,5)

What was the married name of this American who became a British MP? *(31 across)*

Down

1 The first battle of the Civil War – one that produced no satisfactory result for either side (8)
2 John ____, the British Army officer who led the first successful expedition to conquer Mount Everest (1953) (4)
3 Burke's ____, a famous work of British genealogy, established in 1826 (7)
4 City of northern India renowned for its fort and an even more famous building (4)
5 A gruesome Dutch painting depicts the brutal death of the __ ____brothers in 1672 at the hands of supporters of William of Orange (2,4)
6 Name applied to an area of Staffordshire whose main industry took off in the mid-18th century with the creation of Creamware (9)
7 An antiquated term for fortified wine imported from Spain and the Canary Islands (4)
8 Symbol of the peasantry on the red Soviet flag (6)
13 Last name of the Mormon leader who founded Salt Lake City in 1847 (5)
15 Northumberland village, birthplace of the railway pioneer George Stephenson (5)
16 The third wife of Emperor Claudius, executed after going through a form of marriage with Gaius Silius in an apparent attempt to seize power in Rome (9)
19 Colourful American frontierswoman remembered as ____Jane (8)
20 Huldrych ____, the most important figure in the Swiss Protestant Reformation (7)
21 ____of Flanders, queen to William the Conqueror (7)
23 Major shipping line formed in 1840 by a timber merchant from Halifax, Nova Scotia (6)
26 Roman emperor who ended his life, and his three-month reign, in AD 69 (4)
28 Name, formally adopted in 1935, of the country known in the west as Persia (4)
29 Roman emperor who succeeded his stepfather, Claudius, aged just 17 (4)

Compiled by **Eddie James**

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, January 2022 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***january2022@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **19 January 2022**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the March 2022 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *https://policies.immediate.co.uk/privacy* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry.
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Solution to our December 2021 crossword

Across 5 Ho Chi Minh 8 Model 10 Goa 11 Civil rights 12 Creon 13 Tuchman 16 Turpin 17 Apache 21 Edmund I 23 Syria 25 Wiremu Kingi 27 SAS 28 Ligny 29 Nemrut Dag
Down 1 Diocletian 2 Nirvana 3 Impi 4 Odiham 5 Hugo 6 Chaucer 7 Helots 9 Lysander 14 Copernicus 15 Ethelwulf 18 Cragside 19 Dickens 20 Tsunami 22 Murage 24 V-sign 26 Maya

Four winners of *Storyland*
C Skinner, Suffolk; C Greenwood, Lancashire; JM Foxall, West Midlands; J Pratley, Worcestershire

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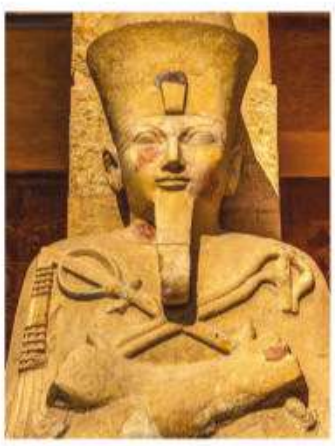

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Miles Russell explains how ancient British tribes managed to survive the arrival of the legions

Sleuths and spirits

Anna Maria Barry and Fiona Snailham describe Arthur Conan Doyle's fascination with spiritualism

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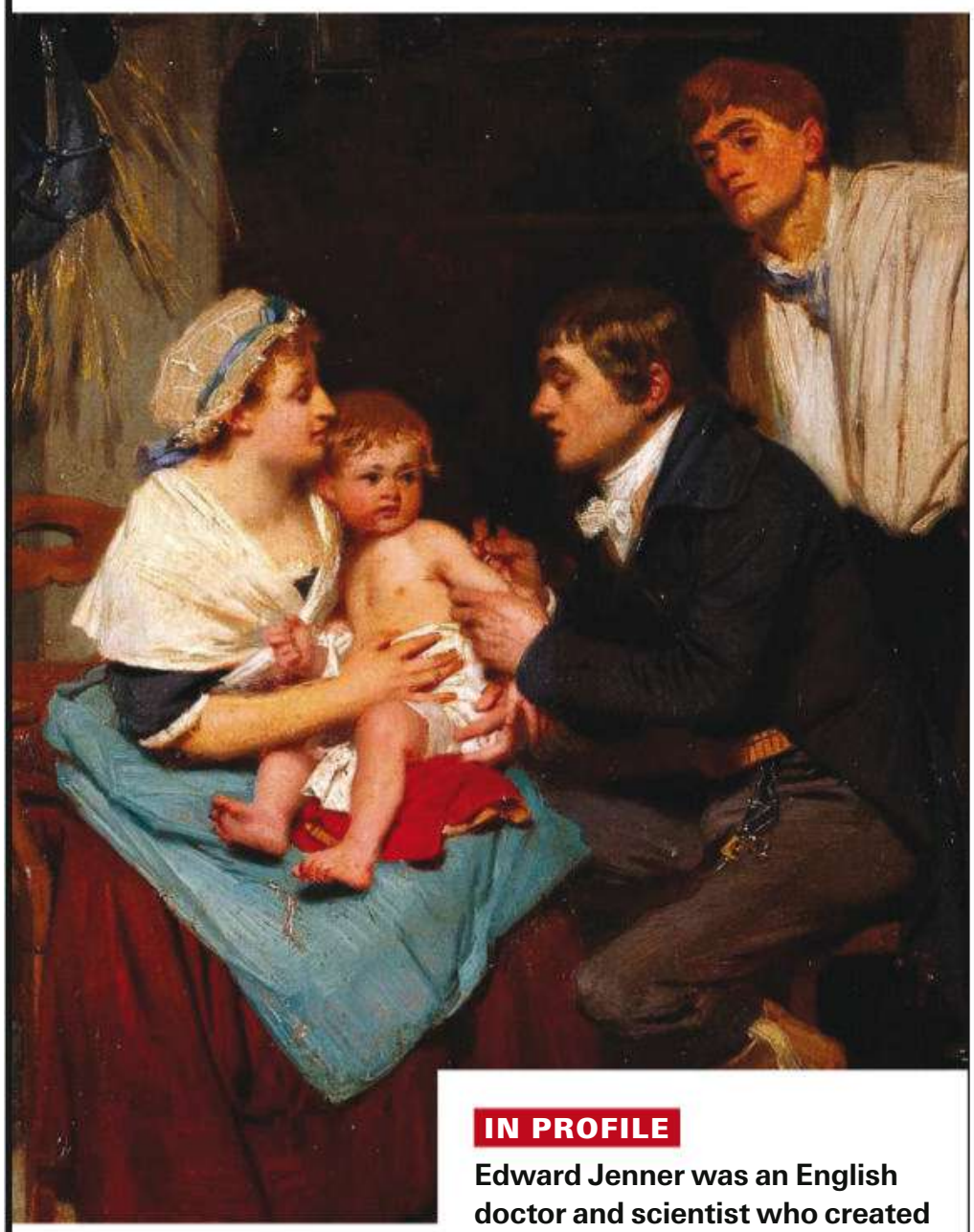
Penelope J Corfield explores the rich variety of life during the 18th century

MY HISTORY HERO

*Vaccinologist **Professor Dame Sarah Gilbert** chooses*

Edward Jenner

1749–1823



Edward Jenner vaccinates a baby in a painting from 1884. "What he did that was so important was to test his vaccine and communicate his findings," says Sarah Gilbert

IN PROFILE

Edward Jenner was an English doctor and scientist who created the world's first vaccine, the smallpox vaccine. The eighth child of a Gloucestershire churchman, the father of vaccinology saved the lives of millions of people around the world. He died of an apparent stroke, aged 73, and was survived by two of his three children.

When did you first hear about Edward Jenner? In my school days. But it was not until after 2005, when I became more involved in vaccine development, that I learned more about his story and all that he achieved.

Dame Sarah Gilbert is a professor of vaccinology at Oxford University. She co-developed the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine with the Oxford Vaccine Group

What kind of man was he? He was a country doctor, but also a naturalist, and in his first paper he observed how the cuckoo threw other eggs out of nests – so he was obviously a naturally curious person. He liked to understand how things worked and was also keen on communicating his findings. At heart, I think he was a scientist despite working as a doctor.

What made Jenner a hero? He's known as the "Father of Vaccinology", and for good reason. Everyone knows how he vaccinated his gardener's eight-year-old son, James Phipps, with cowpox taken from a milkmaid. He did it because he wanted to stop another practice: deliberately infecting children with a small amount of the smallpox virus to protect them against smallpox. This was an unpleasant procedure – it had been done to him as a child – and he wanted to find a better, safer way of protecting people against smallpox. And that's why he used cowpox.

What was his finest hour? Persisting with publishing his findings on the smallpox vaccine until everybody knew about them, which had huge benefits for public health. In his day, the disease killed around one in 10 of the population, and as many as one in five in towns.

What he did that was so important was to test his vaccine – by trying to infect James with smallpox after inoculating him – and test it again, and then write up his findings on a number of cases and present them to the Royal Society. He went on to vaccinate as many local people as possible: both the gentry and those too poor to pay, in a building in his garden known as the Temple of Vaccinia. Smallpox is the only human disease that has been eradicated and that all goes back to his work.

Can you see any parallels between Jenner's life and your own? I have also initiated development of a vaccine, which went into clinical testing and was then proven to be effective. The regulatory and ethical requirements to do this are very different now, and I wonder what Jenner would have made of them. But I am sure he would have been cheering us on.

> "I wonder what Jenner would have made of the challenges of developing a vaccine today. I'm sure he would have been cheering us on"

LISTEN

What would you ask Jenner if you could meet him? I'd like to know whether he thought vaccination is all about protecting the individual or the whole population. H

In Radio 4's **Great Lives**, guests choose inspirational figures: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxsb*

BBC RADIO 4

Dame Sarah Gilbert was talking to York Membery

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